# THE DIFFERENCES OF THE IMAMS

**(References added)**

**Shaykh al-Hadith**

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# Contents:

# AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

We praise Allah and send blessings upon His noble Messenger (PBUH) and upon His Messenger's family, his Companions, his followers, and the upholders of the true faith.

To proceed, in Ramadan 1346 AH, a monthly digest entitled *"Al-Mazahir"* was launched by Madrasa Mazahir 'Ulüm (Saharanpur) under the editorship of my dear friend respected Mawlana Jalil, who at that time was a teacher at the above-mentioned institute and is presently the Mufti of Jami'a Ashrafiyya, Lahore. At the insistence of Mawlana Jalil, I started writing articles for this monthly digest on the topic of "The Differences of the Imams" [*Ikhtilaf al-a'imma*], in spite of my inefficiency and incapability. Despite the barrage of engagements, I continued writing a few pages each month for this magazine. However, due to certain circumstances, the said magazine terminated publication after about fourteen months. Consequently, my humble articles also came to an end. Many friends and editors of other magazines strongly insisted I complete this series but to no avail. I was able to write for the first magazine simply because the editor Mawlana Jalil was a teacher at the *madrasa* and he was always around to ask me to write. However, at the termination of this magazine, in spite of my own desire and the insistence of my colleagues, the book could not reach completion.

My initial intention was to compile a detailed and comprehensive book on this subject but my various academic [*'ilmi*] as well as literary [*ta'lifi*] engagements precluded the realization of this intention. At that time, some friends insisted I publish whatever had been completed as part one of this book. Since (I felt) the subject matter was deficient, I had planned to publish it once some more (material) was added so it. However, now there remains no hope whatsoever of fulfilling this ambition. Excessive ailments have rendered me totally helpless and here I am sitting on the edge of the grave.

Mawlana Muhammad Shahid and other sincere friends insisted that whatever had been compiled is not devoid of benefit. So, (following my permission), Mawlana Muhammad Shahid decided to print whatever has been compiled. May Allah Most High grant blessing [*baraka*] in this, may He benefit the people from it, and may He bless Mawlana Shahid with success in this world as well as the next. *Amin.*

My success *is* only from Allah, upon Him do I place my trust, and to Him do I turn.

# INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allah and peace and salutations upon the Messenger Muhammad (pbuh).

For some time now people have been occupied with the question that, since the Imams (of various schools) have established everything from the sayings and practices of the Messenger of Allah , why are there differences of opinion among them? The numerous sessions of debates and the excessive number of publications on the issues of controversy have rendered the problem even more menacing. The issue has reached such dire proportions that those who object (to why she Imams have differed) have split into two groups. The first group is haplessly trapped in their evil thoughts of the Imams, so much so that even if they wish to disentangle themselves from this vicious web just out of good thought for the Imams, they are unable to free themselves from this trap because they are further ensnared by the apparent disparity between the sayings of the Imams and some of the clear source texts.

The second group, on the other hand, has gone even further and, let alone the Imams, they have started harboring insolent thoughts about the Messenger of Allah himself; simply because of the apparently contradictory hadiths transmitted from him. However, the fault lies in referring to (English or) Urdu translations of the hadiths, because in order to get a clear picture of the meaning, one has to posses the intellectual capacity to comprehend the hadiths together with a proper understanding of the background and *the* prelude of the hadiths. In *the* absence of these prerequisites, the *mere* translation of the hadiths is bound to lead to objections and misgivings.

The repercussions of these differences have reached such proportions that people have split up into various sects grappling and contending with one another. The *wudu'* of one group is considered invalid by the other while the *salat* of one group is considered void *by* the other, and so forth. In *zakat, sawm, hajj* and virtually every other act of worship [*'ibada*] as well, there is inevitably some difference or other which has led to people debating with one another.

Therefore, It has become necessary to expose the basis of the differences (of opinion) found among the Imams. The reasons for these differences, dating back to the first epoch of Islam, will be expounded upon to demonstrate that the apparently contradictory texts of the hadiths leave no scope for doubting the Messenger of Allah, nor do they give anyone the right to cast aspersions on the Companions [*sahaba*], the Followers [tabi'in] or the Imams (may Allah have mercy on them). The fact is that all the Imams [*mujtahidin*] were leaders of the correct path and they encouraged and guided the masses toward the correct path as well. Any slanderous remark cast against them is a sure sign of the deprivation of Allah's mercy [*hirman*]. May Allah protect us. Amin.

There is obviously no doubt about the importance of this issue. I would have preferred to see the topic addressed by someone much more capable than myself. I pray that my writing does not merely add to the confusion rather than clarifying the master.

Nevertheless, I had excused myself from this mammoth task, but the insistence of the people of Mazahir ‘Ulüm compelled me to put pen to paper. While acknowledging my incompetence, I present my disordered work.

The differences among the Imams are divided into three stages. The first involves contradictory narrations [*riwayat*]; in other words, the apparent contradictions between the words and deeds of Allah’s Messenger (PBUH). The second stage deals with the contradictions found in the *athar*, meaning the apparent contradictions between the words and actions of the Companions [*sahaba*] and Followers [*tabi'in*]. The third stage encompasses the differences found among the schools of thought [*madhahib*] in other words; the apparent contradictions between the recognized opinions of the various Imams, which later became the established views of their followers.

Since these differences have occurred at three stages, I consider it necessary to write briefly on each of these stages. Also, since the second and third stages of these differences are actually an offshoot of the first stage. I will base my writings according to the same order as well. And from Allah do we seek divine guidance.

# PART ONE

# THE ERA OF THE MESSENGER (PBUH)

## The Primary Reason

## VARYING COMMANDS FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE AND CIRCUMSTANCES

During the time of the Messenger of Allah, the present-day system of imparting Islamic law was not in operation. There were no comprehensive books of Islamic jurisprudence [*fiqh*] available and in-depth compilations on specialized subjects. The fundamentals, etiquette, conditions and interdictions of the laws [*ahkam*] and rulings [*masa'il*] were not recorded separately. The only method of imparting Islamic rulings was that whenever a command was revealed, the Messenger of Allah used to inform the people verbally and demonstrate it practically Once the verses of *wudu'* [ablution] were revealed he showed his community how to perform *wudu'*. When the verses of *salat* were revealed, the Angel Jibra'il actually demonstrated the correct procedure of *salat* before the Messenger of Allah and he in turn taught the Umma how to perform *salat*. There were no distinctions whatsoever between a certain act being *fard* or *wajib*, or a certain posture being a *sunna* or integral [*rukn*], etc. The Messenger's demonstration left no complexities or uncertainties.

Even the Companions refrained from digressing into possibilities and rationalities. If someone had to finely examine or challenge laws, it was considered rude and such a person would be admonished for his impudence.

Abdullah ibn 'Umar once narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, 'A person should not prevent his wife attending the masjid if she wishes to perform *bsalat* therein." One of Ibn 'Umar's sons, considering the prevalent conditions (of his time), declared "We will not allow them to attend *salat* at the *masjid*." Since this statement was in apparent contrast to the hadith of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) , Ibn 'Umar found it extremely offensive and not only

did he admonish his son,[1] but according to the narration of *Musnad Ahmad*, he refrained from speaking to him right until his death.

Similarly, Ibn ‘Umar was once asked if *witr salat* was *wajib* or *sunna*. He responded: "‘The Messenger of Allah as well as the Companions [*sahaba*] always performed the *witr salat*. "The questioner[2] continued asking the same question repeatedly and Ibn ‘Umar continued to provide the same answer.

The reason for his unwavering answer was simply to draw attention to the fact that those who sincerely wish to practice Islam will not delve into any intricacies. If Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and his Companions consistently carried out a certain action, its obligation [*wujub*] is self-evident. In short, the laws of Islam used to be taught in a practical manner according to the need of the occasion. The Companions used to detest questions based on mere assumption: questions such as, if a certain act is omitted in *wudu'* or something additional is done, what is the ruling?"

Ibn ‘lJmar says that, ‘Umar invoked the curse of Allah on a person who posed hypothetical questions. The Companions would only ask the Messenger of Allah about issues (*masa'il*) which occurred in reality. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) would then issue a verdict according to the circumstances and conditions of the questioner. Differences and contradictory narrations are quite obviously destined to follow from this. A few examples are listed below which demonstrate this fact even more explicitly.

Imam Muslim narrates on the authority of ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar that a blind Companion [*sahabi*] once approached Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and submitted: "I did not have anyone to guide me to the *masjid*, please excuse my absence from the *masjid* for the congregational *salat* and permit me to perform my *salat* at home.' The Messenger of Allah granted him permission. However, when he learnt that this Companion lived in close proximity to the *masjid* and he was able to hear the *adhan*, the[3] Messenger (PBUH) withdrew his permission and ordered the man to join the congregational *salat* in the *masjid*. Conversely in the case of 'Itbãn ibn Malik., Allah's Messenger[4] (PBUH) accepted his excuse of blindness and exempted him from attending the congregational *salat*.

Allah's Messenger (PBUH) had permitted ‘Abdullãh ibn Zayd, who had heard the words of the[5] call to prayer (*adhan*] in a dream to make the call to commence [*iqama*] inspite of Bilãl calling out the *adhan*. However, once on a journey Ziyad ibn Hárith al-Suda'i called out the *adhan* and Bilal was about to call out the *iqama* when the Messenger of Allah said, "Whosoever calls out[6] the *adhan*, has the right to call out the iqama as well." Saying this, he restrained Bilal from calling out the *iqama*.

Once, Abü Bakr gave his entire wealth in charity and Allah's Messenger (PBUH) accepted it. However, when certain other Companions decided to give their entire wealth in charity Allah's Messenger (PBUH) did not accept it.

These are not isolated incidents. There are thousands of such incidents, which clearly demonstrate that the Messenger of Allah issued varying orders for different people.

Abu Hurayra narrates that a person once asked Allah's Messenger (PBUH) if he was permitted to hug and kiss his wife while fasting. The Messenger (PBUH) granted him permission. However, when another Companion sought permission to do the same, he was declined permission. Abu Hurayra said, "I immediately understood the reason for the disparity[7] between the two. The one who was permitted was an old man while the other Companion was a young man."

In cases like the above-mentioned incident, each narrator will narrate what he heard directly from Allah’s Messenger (PBUH). The person who was granted permission to kiss his wife while fasting will obviously narrate that hugging and kissing does not nullify the fast. However, the other person will narrate his hadith in direct contrast to this and will vehemently deny the permissibility of kissing and hugging while fasting. This apparent contradiction between the two narrations is not only confined to two isolated narrators. In fact, there were always groups of students, devoted followers, enquirers, visitors, delegates, and others in the presence of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) who would have heard these exchanges and related them according to their own understanding.

For this reason, the two groups who heard two conflicting laws would narrate only what they heard from Allah’s Messenger (PBUH). Any number of conflicting narrations falling under this fundamental rule will still be considered negligible because every gathering consisted of various people, the exempted [*ma'dhur*] as well as the healthy, the able-bodied as well as the weak. The Law took into consideration the health of one and the weakness of the other. This is the reason for the apparent contradiction.

One of the people in the gathering was so strong-hearted that even if he gave all his wealth in charity, there was no fear of him ever complaining. Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) was quite confident that no matter what calamity afflicted that particular person, he would become ever more engrossed in turning his attention toward Allah and totally at ease with the fate issued by Him.

On the other hand, there were other personalities in the gathering upon whom he did not have such confidence. In fact, these was a fear of them exceeding even the boundaries of lamentation if they gave away all of their wealth in charity. Hence, he prohibited them from doing so.

Similarly, for a traveler who is quite strong and able, it is most appropriate for him to fast in the holy month of Ramadan. He should not postpone the fast when traveling, thereby forfeiting the great virtues of this month. On the other hand, if a person is extremely weak and fasting while traveling will most probably be detrimental to him, he is not permitted to last, Due to such differences, the hadiths narrating laws pertinent to fasting while traveling are sure to differ as well.

A Sa’id al-Khudri narrates, “On the sixteenth of Ramadan we set out for a battle in the company of Allah’s Messenger (PBUH). Some of our friends observed the fasts of Ramadan, while others decided sane to fast. However, each group had no objection against the other. Those fasting did not accuse chose abstaining nor did the latter challenge the former.”[8]

Hamza ibn ‘Amr Aslami narrates that he once asked the Messenger of Allah whether, since he was in a habit of fasting excessively it would be permissible for him to fast while traveling. Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) replied, “You are at liberty to fast or to abstain from fasting. You may do as you please.”[9] However, Jabir narrates that Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) said, “There is no good in fasting while traveling”[10] In fact, one hadith even refers to those who fast when traveling are sinners. Notwithstanding this, ‘Abd aI-Rahmãn lbn ‘Awf narrates that Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) said, “The one who fasts while traveling is like a person who breaks his fast while at home.”[11]

In short, the disparity of narrations stems from the disparity of conditions. As evident from the aforementioned incidents, the Messenger of Allah (sometimes) issued two utterly different orders for different individuals. The group that was present when the first order was given will obviously differ from the group that was present when the second order was issued. As a result, two large groups became narrators of two totally conflicting rulings.

There could have been, in fact there were, some people who were present in both gatherings, and they were most certainly compelled to ponder over the disparity between the rulings and reach a decision whereby both rulings are taken into account. As explained above, Abu Hurayra provided the conflicting narrations about kissing and hugging while fasting. He narrated the reason for the disparity as well.

There are thousands of other similar incidents, which cannot be contained here wholly, and it is not our purpose to do so here. Even though the aforementioned fact (regarding she difference of narrations) is quite evident, a few testimonial incidents proving this fact were provided merely to drive the point home.

Following such diverging narrations, the responsibility now falls upon the Companions [*sahaba*], the Followers [*tabi'in*], and the *mujtahid* Imams to determine the source, occasion and correct juncture of each narration, and they should interpret each narration according to the demands of the occasion.

## Reason 2

# A SPECIAL CASE IS TAKEN AS A GENERAL ORDER

The second reason for contradictory narrations is that at times, the Messenger of Allah issued an exclusive order for a particular person due to some special reason, and the audience [*majlis*] was led to believe that it was a general order and not a restricted order. Thus, they started narrating it as a general rule.

For example; according to 'A'isha, lbn 'lJmar narrates that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said; 'The deceased is punished due to the crying of his house folk." 'A'isha rejected this interpretation. According to her, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) made this statement in regard to a Jewish woman whose household was crying over her.[12]

***Apparent Contradictions in the Hadiths***

Allow me to point out at this juncture that we do not wish to elaborate on the category of this hadith, nor do we wish to comment on it, nor do we wish to ascertain whether 'A'isha's hadith or lbn Umar's hadith is given preference. All we wish to clarify here is that such degrees of disparity and contradiction exist in the field of hadith study.

For example, according to the Hanafi school of thought, the *salat* for greeting the *masjid* [*tahiyyat al-masjid*] is prohibited while the Friday sermon [*khutba*] is in progress. However, one hadith makes mention of a very poor Companion named Sulayk al-Ghatafani who entered the *masjid* while the *khutba* was in progress. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) ordered the Companion to perform *tahiyyat al-masjid* so that the people could witness his poverty and constrained circumstances.[13] Together with this, they also witnessed this special concession awarded to this particular Companion in that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) ordered him to perform supererogatory [*nafl*] *salat* while the sermon was in progress. According certain narrations, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) brought the sermon to a halt and remained standing to enable this Companion to complete his *salat*.

On the basis of this narration, many people considered this action as a general ruling, and as an all-encompassing principle they narrate that a person who enters the *masjid* while the Friday sermon is in progress should perform two *rak'ats* [units] of *tahiyyat al-masjid*.

The story of suckling Salim, the slave of Abu Hudhayfa is also a similar nature. 'A'isha narrates that Sahla bint Suhayl came to Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and submitted, "O Messenger of Allah, I perceive a feeling of displeasure on (my husband) Abu Hudhayfa's face whenever Sãlim, our freed slave, comes before me." Allah's Messenger (PBUH) advised: "Breastfeed him." She replied, "He is a bearded adult." He said,[14] "Go ahead and breastfeed him. You will not perceive any displeasure on. Abu Hudhayfas face thereafter."

On the basis of this narration, 'A'isha, considered this a general rule while the other wives of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) rejected this opinion. Umm Salama, the wife of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) , comments on this: "We are not aware of the[15] actual reason for this command. However, we are confident that this rule was specifically confined to Sãlim only."

Ibn Qutayba narrates in his book *Ta'wil mukhtalaf al-hadith* that 'Imran ibn Husayn says, "By Allah, I know so many Hadiths that I can narrate rather extensively if I want to, but the practice of certain Companions impede me from doing So. They (i.e. those Companions) heard many hadiths from Allah's Messenger (PBUH) like I did, and they remained in his service like I did, but some of them have committed many inaccuracies while narrating. I fear that if I had to narrate, then the narration of the hadiths would bewilder me just as they were left bewildered. However, let me draw your attention to the[16] fact that this was only an oversight on their part and they had no intention of committing these blunders."

It was for the same reason that 'Umar prohibited the people from excessive narration during his caliphate [*khilafa*]. In fact; he even prevented some of the very senior Companions from excessive narrations of the hadiths.

Abu Salama asked Abu Hurayra if he used to narrate as abundantly during the time of 'Umar as he did in later times. Abu Hurayra replied, "If I were narrating (then) like I am doing now, 'Umar would have cautioned me with his whip."

In short, the second reason for the apparent contradictions in the narrations is that at times, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) issued a special command confined to one person only, but a narrator narrated it as a general rule. The examples have been explained above.

## Reason 3

## A GENERAL ORDER IS TAKEN AS A SPECIAL CASE

The third reason for the apparent contradictions between narrations is the opposite of the second reason. In other words, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) mentioned something as an all-encompassing rule, but the narrator confined it to specific individuals only.

One example is the narration of Ibn ‘Umar regarding the punishment of the deceased. Ibn ‘Umar narrated this as general rule. However, ‘A’isha said that this applied only to a particular incident of a Jewish woman who was being mourned by her family.

Hence, for the revision of such narrations, a great need is felt for the *mujtahids* who are aware of all the various types of narrations. From these narrations they are able to deduce which rules are of general applications, which are special, and what the reasons for rendering something permissible for one and impermissible for the other.

## Reason 4

# A DIFFERENCE OF PERCEPTION

Quite often, there are apparent contradictions in the narrations simply various people saw Allah's Messenger (PBUH) doing a certain thing and they all narrated according to their own understanding of things. The beholders of any deed are obviously of diverse perception. Some of the witnesses were very discerning. They were able to understand every incident according, to the occasion. On the other hand, some of them were not as discerning, but they had very retentive memories. They narrated certain events according to the way they understood them. Many examples of this can be found in the hadiths dealing with the pilgrimage (*hajj*). For example, one of the narrators says that Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) made an *ifrad hajj* because he heard the Messenger (PBUH) saying “*Labbayk bi hajjatin*" or "I have presented -myself in Your service to perform the *hajj*.” The narration itself is authentic and the narrator is not guilty of any deficiency. However, other people narrate that Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) performed a *qiran hajj*. This narration apparently seems contradictory to the first, because the *qiran hajj* is very different from the *ifrad hajj*. In actual fact though, there is no contradiction between the narrations since it's permissible for one performing *qiran hajj* to say “*Labbayk bi hajjatin*" (as Allah’s Messenger had uttered). Only a *mujtahid* is able to bring about some harmony between the apparently contradictory narrations and avoid undue confusion.

Similarly the hadith dealing with the Messenger’s commencement of his *ihram* or “pilgrim sanctity,” There are conflicting narrations as to exactly when Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) started his *ihram*. Due to this, the Imams have also differed as so when it is most virtuous for one to initiate one’s *ihram*. Prompted by these very same contradictory narrations, Sa’id ibn Jubayr , an outstanding Follower [tabi’in], asked ‘Abdullah bin Abbas to explain these contradictions. Imam Abu Dawud (may Allah have mercy on him) transmits this narration in complete detail as follows:

Sa'id ibn Jubayr said: I said to Abdullah ibn Abbas: Abul Abbas, I am surprised to see the difference of opinion amongst the companions of the Messenger (PBUH) about the wearing of *ihram* by the Messenger of Allah when he made it obligatory.

He replied: I am aware of it more than the people. The Messenger of Allah performed only one *hajj*. Hence the people differed among themselves. The Messenger of Allah came out (from Medina) with the intention of performing *hajj*. When he offered two rak'ats of prayer in the mosque at Dhu al-Hulayfah, he made it obligatory by wearing it.

At the same meeting, he raised his voice saying *'labbayk'* for hajj, when he finished his two *rak'ats*. Some people heard it and I retained it from him. He then rode (on the she-camel), and when it (the she-camel) stood up, with him

on its back, he raised his voice saying *'labbayk'* and some people heard it at that moment. This is because the people were coming in groups, so they heard him raising his voice calling saying *'labbayk'* when his she-camel stood up with him on its back, and they thought that the Messenger of Allah had raised his voice saying *'labbayk'* when his she-camel stood up with him on its back.

The Messenger of Allah proceeded further; when he ascended the height of al-Bayda' he raised his voice saying *'labbayk'*. Some people heard it at that moment. They thought that he had raised his voice saying *'labbayk'* when he ascended the height of al-Bayda'. I swear by Allah, he raised his voice saying *'labbayk'* at the place where he prayed, and he raised his voice saying *'labbayk'* when his she-camel[17] stood up with him on its back, and he raised his voice saying *'labbayk'* when he ascended the height of al-Bayda'.

Since Sa'id ibn Jubayr heard various contradictory accounts of this *hajj* he felt he should delve deeper into the true account of what exactly took place. 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbbs was fully aware of what transpired, so he confidently explained exactly what happened. Since he was a jurist [*faqih*] as well as a *mujtahid*, he also explained the reasons for the differences of narrations and at the same time he brought about harmony between all the narrations,

In contrast, if an ordinary layman is confronted with all these apparently contradictory narrations, the unfortunate person will be left perturbed and dumbfounded. Objections and various complications are thereafter bound to follow. At the end of it all, even the people who do not adhere to any *madhhab* [*ghayr muqallidin*], in spite of their vehemence and prejudice, have no retreat but to make *taqlid* (i.e. resort to a school of thought [*madhhab*]).

In his book, *Sabil al Rashad*, Mawlãna (Rashid Ahmad) Gangohi (may Allah be pleased with him) quotes an extract from the *Isha'at al-sunna* by Mawlana Muhammad Husayn Batãlwi, a leader of those who do not follow a traditional school in jurisprudence, who writes that a non-*mujtahid* has no retreat or option but to follow a *mujtahid* (*Isha'at al-sunna* II:2II). Mawlana Batalwi further writes:

'After twenty-five years of experience, we have become aware of the fact that those who, out of ignorance, totally relinquish following a school altogether [*taqlid*] eventually relinquish Islam altogether. Some of them convert to Christianity while some of them become atheists. The most *insignificant* outcome of this freedom is flagrant violation of Islamic law (ibid II:53).

## Reason 5

# INTENTIONAL ACTION VS COINCIDENCE

At times many groups of people witnessed the Messenger of Allah doing something. Some of them considered it coincidental and treated it as a natural and habitual activity of his. Others considered it intentional and willful, thereby narrating it as a *sunna* or *mustahab* (preferred) action. There are many examples of this nature in the books of hadith. For example, on the occasion of the farewell pilgrimage, it is an accepted fact that the Messenger of Allah camped at a place called Abtah. According to Abu Hurayra and 'Abdullah[18] Ibn 'Umar, this lodging was included in the devotions of *hajj* and it is *sunna* for a pilgrim to camp at Abtah. However, according to 'A'isha and 'Abbas, this stay over at Abtah was coincidental and it had nothing to do with the devotions of *hajj*. The servants pitched[19] his tent at that spot: that is why he camped there. Plus, it facilitated easy departure toward Madina Munawwara.

This is where the services of a *mujtahid* or a jurist [*faqih*] are required to sift through the various narrations and views of the Companions and award preference to one opinion over the other. The Imams have done accordingly on the basis of the following hadith:

"We will camp at Khayf Bani Kinana where the polytheists had vowed to oppose Islam."[20] The Imams are of the view that this lodging was not coincidental but intentional. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) intended to demonstrate the magnificence of Islam at the very spot where the disbelievers displayed their rejection [*kufr*] of Islam. Together with this objective, if other reasons are found—for example, he camped there to facilitate easy departure this does not mean that his stay at Abtah was not intentional.

## Reason 6

# UNDERLYING CAUSES

At times, contradictions appear due to the contradictory underlying reasons found in the hadiths. For example, it is mentioned in a hadith that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) was once seated when the bier [*janaza*] of a disbeliever passed by. He immediately stood up.[21] According to some narrations, he got up in honor of the angels accompanying the bier.[22] If this is the case, there is even more reason for the people to stand for the passing of a Muslim bier. The narrators who consider this to be the underlying principle of the hadith do not even mention the word 'disbeliever' in their narrations. They do not consider it necessary because it is immaterial whether the bier is that or a disbeliever, due to the presence of the angels.

However if we learn from other narrations that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) stoop up so that the bier would not pass above the heads of the Muslims, as this is a form of humiliation to them. If this is the reason for his standing up, then the practice of standing up for *janaza* will be restricted to the bier of a disbeliever only. Hence, in this case, the word "disbeliever" must be mentioned in the hadith by the narrator.

Similar is the case of another hadith. Rifi' ibn Khadij says, "We used to hire out our lands on the basis of temporary sharecropping [*muzara'a*]. This was very beneficial to us but Allah's Messenger (PBUH) prohibited us from it. Obedience to Allah and His Messenger precedes all benefits."[23] 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar says, "We used to hire our plots on a temporary sharecropping basis and regarded his beneficial and permissible. However, since Rifi' ibn Khadij informed us that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) prohibited it, we abandoned this practice.[24]

In another narration, Rafi' ibn Khadij says, 'My uncle and other family members used to hire out their lands on a temporary sharecropping basis. The land owner and the farmer would agree that the crop which will grow around the water supply drains or any other pre-specified area will belong to the land owner while the remainder will belong to the farmer. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) prohibited them from this." Rafi' ibn Khadij was then asked, if the land owner lets his land on a specified rental?" He replied, "That is quite in order."[25]

In contrast to these narrations, 'Amr ibn Dinar relates, "I told Tawüs to desist from hiring out his land on the basis of sharecropping because the Companions prohibited people from doing this. Upon this Tawus replied, 'The most learned of the Companions, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas informed me that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) did not actually

prohibit this practice altogether What he actually meant was that it is better for a person to lend his plot of land to his Muslim brother for purposes of cultivation instead of letting it to him in exchange of something."[26]

So, according to Ibn ‘Abbas; the underlying cause for the prohibition was merely to ensure that people maintain good conduct with their fellow Muslim brothers. This prohibition was not a juridical injunction. However, according to Rafi’ ibn Khadij, the underlying cause of this ban was to demonstrate its prohibition and nothing else.

There are many other examples of this nature in the books of hadith. We do not wish to encompass them all, nor is it our objective to do so.

In short, the narrators differ in the underlying cause for the injunction expressed in a particular hadith. Each narrator will narrate the hadith according to his own understanding of it. Hence, we consequently have two apparently conflicting hadiths.

Nevertheless, one who is confronted with both hadiths and is cognizant of the principles of hadith, etc., is bound to grant preference to one of the narrations only and attempt to reinterpret the other. This can only be carried out by a person who knows many hadiths on a given subject and who also knows the actual texts of the various hadiths. On the other hand, a person who only knows the translation of one hadith on a particular topic, has no knowledge of a contrary hadith, and is not aware of the principles of awarding preference to some hadiths over others: will he ever be able to understand which is awarded preference over the other and why?

## Reason 7

# WORDS HAVE MULTIPLE MEANINGS

One of other reasons for the apparent contradictions in the hadiths is that there are many words that are sometimes used in the literal sense and at other times in the technical or figurative sense. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) used to say something using a particular word in one context, while some of the Companions considered the usage in a different context. There are not a few, but thousands of instances of this nature.

To give one example, the word *wudu'* is quite common in its technical sense (of ablution before prayer). However, literally, the word *wudu'* means cleanliness, purity, and washing of the hands. In a narration of the *Shama’il* of Imam Tirmidhi, Salman once told Allah's Messenger (PBUH) that according to the Torah, *wudu’* after meals brings about blessings [*baraka*] in one’s food. Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) added, *'Wudu'* before as well as after the meal is a source of blessing in ones food.” In Salman’s statement as well as the statement Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) , the word *wudü*’ unanimously refers to the washing of the hands.

In addition, there is a lengthy hadith narrated by ‘Ikräsh in *Sunan al-Tirmidhi.* At the end of the hadith he says, “After partaking of this meal, water was brought before Allah’s Messenger (PBUH). He washed his hands and thereafter rubbed them over his face and arms. He thereafter addressed me, ‘O ‘Ikrãsh, the injunction of making *wudu’* after partaking of something cooked over the fire refers to this (form of) *wudu'*.'"[27] In spite of this narration being somewhat disputed [*mutakallam fih*], we can still establish that the word *wudu’* is not used in its technical sense but in its literal sense.

Similarly, it is narrated in *Jam' al-Fawa'id* on the authority of Bazzar that Mu'adh was asked, "Do you perform *wudu*' after partaking of something cooked over the fire?" He replied, "We wash our hands and mouth after meals and interpret it as wudu"[28] For this reason, all four of the Imams have unanimously agreed that the narrations which mention (the obligation of performing) *wudu*' after eating something cooked over the fire refers to *wudu*' in its literal sense (i.e. just washing the hands and mouth). Otherwise such an injunction could have been abrogated.

Likewise, on one occasion, 'Ali washed a few parts (of those normally washed during *wudü'*) of his body. Thereafter, he commenced, "'This is the *wudu'* of one whose *wudu*' is still intact." Therefore, washing only a few parts of the body is not referred to as *wudu'* in the technical sense.

These are just a few examples where the word "*wudu'*" is not used in its technical sense. My aim in presenting these examples is to show that the word "*wudu*'" and other words have been utilized in their literal as well as their technical sense. From this, one can understand the principle cause of differences as well.

Quite frequently, certain narrators will consider the word *wudu'* in a certain hadith in its technical sense, and they will most probably add an explanation like "*wudü'* such as *wudü'* for *salat*."[29] This is to ensure that no doubt remains and those listening are not left in any confusion. On the other hand, if the word *wudu'* is not intended in its technical sense but in its literal sense, a narrator will most probably explain that it refers to the washing of the mouth and hands, etc. This is explained in order to avoid confusion.

It is now clear that differences among the narrations are bound to occur. Differences among the Companions [*sahaba*] and Followers [*tabi'in*] will consequently bring about differences among the jurists [*fuqaha*] as well. This is why, initially, there were differences over whether or not the consumption of anything cooked over the fire nullifies the ablution [*wudu'*]. However, since there were relatively very few narrations supporting its nullification in the latter times, all four Imams unanimously agreed that the ablution would not be nullified by eating something cooked over a fire.

There are many other issues on which the Imams [*'ulama'*] and their followers disagree. One example is, the issue of whether touching private parts nullifies the *wudü'* or not. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, 'whosoever touches his private parts should perform *wudu'*". The Companions, Followers, and the Imams have all differed as to the type of *wudu'* required. According to some of them, the hadith is referring to *wudu'* in its technical sense, while some of them assert that it refers to the literal meaning of the word. Similarly, they have differed the meaning of the word "touch" in the aforementioned hadith. Some of them say that the word "touch" refers to its literal meaning. Others say that the word "touch" refers to passing urine, because one normally touches one's private part to cleanse it after urinating. Similarly they have differed on the status of the *wudu'* demanded by this hadith. According to some of the jurists, *wudu'* is compulsory [*wajib*], while others regard this *wudu'* as preferable [*mustahab*].This will be explained in further detail in the next chapter.

Of similar nature is a hadith in which Allah's Messenger (PBUH) says, "The *salat* is broken if a woman, dog or donkey passes in front of a person performing *salat*" Some jurists take this hadith literally. According to them, the *salat* is technically nullified if a woman, dog or donkey passes in front of one who is praying. However, according to other Companions and jurists, there is no relationship between the breaking of the *salat* and the passing of one of these three. Therefore, it cannot be in taken in its literal sense. To them, the breaking of the *salat* refers to the breaking of one's concentration in the *salat*. There are not one or two, but scores of facts that affirm this second meaning. They are explained in their respective places (i.e. in books of hadith commentary). We have omitted them here for the sake of brevity.

## Reason 8

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF INJUNCTIONS

The eighth reason for contradictory narrations is closely related to the seventh, and some aspects of it have already been alluded to in the previous chapter. In every language we find that there are various types of injunctions. Thus, when Allah's Messenger (PBUH) issued a certain command, some people considered it so be compulsory i.e. they believed in its compulsion [*wujub*] A second group considered it a preferable and virtuous action, while a third group regarded the injunction as merely giving permission (to perform that action).

An example of this is the hadith which commands us to put water into the nostrils while performing *wudu*'. Taking the obvious and apparent meaning into account, some people regard this as compulsory [*wajib*], whereas another group consider it preferable, judging from other factors.

Similar in nature is another hadith which makes mention of washing the hands after waking up, before making *wudu'* According to some people, the apparent meaning of the hadith is taken, and it is compulsory to wash the hands at that time. However, another group asserts that this is preferable [*sunna*] to wash them.

In actual fact, the reason for the differences of narrations is a long issue indeed. 'This matter can only be reconciled by a jurist [*faqih*] or *mujtahid* because wherever there is a single command, every individual is compelled to view other commands and injunctions as well. This is necessary to enable him to ascertain rise status of that individual command.

If one hadith makes mention of reciting the "*tashahhud*" [prayer recited in the sitting posture of *salat*] while sitting, another hadith says, "Kill the snake and scorpion (if they appear before you) while performing *salat*". Obviously both hadiths can not be of the same status. This is why even the Imams have differed over whether this injunction is compulsory, preferable, or merely a meritorious act.

Similarly the Imams have differed as to whether the injunctions pertaining to the *takbir* of *salat* or the injunction regarding the *tasbih* of *ruku'* and *sujud*, etc., are compulsory or merely preferable. With diligence and perseverance, all the Imams have differentiated between all of these apparently contradictory narrations, keeping in the hadiths, the actions of the Companions, and the principles of jurisprudence [*fiqh*]. Thereafter, they applied every injunction to the correct occasion. This is a clear indication of the indispensability of *mujtahid* and the necessity of adhering to a particular school thought.

Mere recitation of a translation of *Sahih al-Bukhari* will not enable one to determine whether a certain injunction is compulsory, optional or permissible. This is why the scholars of hadith have instituted the study of the principles of Qur'an, hadith, and jurisprudence [*fiqh*] as a prerequisite to the actual science of Qur'an and hadith. This will enable the *mujtahid* to become conscious of the various categories of Qur'anic verses such as the general [*'amm*], specified [*khas*s], ambivalent [*majmal*], unequivocal [*mufassar*], perspicuous [*muhkam*], interpreted [*mu'awwal*], abrogator

[*nashikh*], abrogated [*mansukh*] etc. In addition, he should be aware of the various categories of hadith such as the continuously recurrent [*mutawatir*], non-continuously recurrent [*ghayr mutawatir*], those attributed directly to the Messenger (PBUH) by a Follower without mention of the Companion in between [*mursal*] continuous [*mutassil*], rigorously authenticated [*sahih*], defective [*mu'allal*], weak [*da'if*], etc. He should also be aware of the status of the narrators of the hadiths, and should be well versed in lexicography and grammar. The statements of the Comparisons and the Followers, their differences, and their unanimous decisions should also be studied carefully. Apart from this, the mujtahid should be well acquainted with the types and categories of deduction, analogy, and logical reasoning [*qiyas*].

## Reason 9

## AN INJUNCTION TO SHARPEN THE MIND

On some occasions, the Messenger of Allah issued certain injunctions merely to sharpen the minds of his people. In other words, he wanted the people to contemplate over the injunctions he issued to them. For example, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) saw a person performing *salat* while his lower garment was suspended below his ankles. He[30] instructed the man to repeat not only his *salat* but his *wudu'* as well.

On another occasion, a person performed his *salat* very haphazardly and in extreme haste. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) ordered him to repeat his *salat*, saying his *salat* was not valid. He repeated his *salat* but once again, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) ordered him to go and repeat his *salat*. After this happened a third time and his *salat* was still considered invalid, the person submitted, "Please explain to me. I am unable to comprehend what is required of me." Allah's Messenger (PBUH) then explained to him of the repose and tranquility required in his[31] *salat*.

Differences are bound to occur over incidents such as these because every individual who was present in such a gathering will reinterpret these commands differently. Although there are very few examples of this nature in the books of hadith, they do form the basis of some of the differences in narrations.

## Reason 10

## AFFECTIONATE INJUNCTIONS

## VS

## CAUTIONARY INJUNCTIONS

Allah‘s Messenger (PBUH) was not only the Prophet of the entire community, he was also a physical doctor for the masses, a spiritual doctor to his lovers, and a leader to his people. On the one hand, he was more affectionate than parents to a child, though he was also more efficient than an ordinary teacher and mentor in the field of spiritual nurturing and upbringing. Just as it is possible to find injunctions issued by the Messenger in an affectionate tone, one will also come across many injunctions which were issued as stern warnings and reprimands. This is something about which there can not be any shadow of doubt; it is a clear truth exposed to everyone. Many injunctions of Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) in spite of being issued in one context are bound to be confused with injunctions issued from the opposite context.

These factors are such that each one of them can become an individual reason for the vast differences of narrations, but our discussion is becoming inadvertently lengthy. Owing to the possible frustration of the reader, which is a consequence of lengthy discussions, I have incorporated all those reasons into one. I will terminate this discussion concisely together with a few examples.

Allah's Messenger (PBUH) instructed a woman suffering from dysfunctional uterine bleeding [*mustahada*] to take a single bath for Zuhr and ‘Asr prayer, another bath for Maghrib and ‘Isha prayer, and another bath for the Fajr prayer. The Scholars have differed as to whether this[32] type of bathing is a form of religious injunction or whether it is a form of medical treatment to combat the illness.

Similarly, one hadith mentions the compulsion of *wudu’* after touching the private parts, while another hadith says the private parts are merely a piece of the flesh of one’s body. Therefore, according to this hadith, just as *wudu'* is not compulsory after touching any other part of the body, it is not compulsory after touching the private parts. ‘Allama Sha’rani (may Allah be pleased with him) explains this contradiction thus: “The non-compulsion of *wudü’* is for the masses only, while its compulsion is confined to the leaders of the *Umma*.”

Likewise, some narrations inform us that touching a woman invalidates the *wudu'* while we deduce from other narrations that the *wudu’* remains intact. There are conflicting opinions of the scholars in this regard and they obviously, for various conflicting reasons, either awarded preference to one narration over the other, or they established a compromise between she two conflicting narrations. ‘Allama Sha’rani (may Allah be pleased with him) correlated between these two hadiths in the method demonstrated above. He ruled that the first hadith applies to the leaders while the second is for the general masses.

In one battle, Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) said, “Whoever kills a non- Muslim on the battlefield is entitled to the goods in the possession of the non-Muslim.” According to some scholars, this injunction is more of a political or diplomatic nature than a religious injunction. Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) issued this statement as a king would issue a royal statement. Hence, if the leader of the Muslim army wishes to issue such a statement, he may do so if he feels it is expedient. Conversely, some scholars assert that this was a religious injunction. They argue that it will always be applicable and can not be subjected to the discretion of the leader. There are thousands of hadiths dealing with jihad which are perfect examples of the differences in narrations.

In addition, there are many narrations which prohibit his companions from certain farming arrangements. This prohibition stems from the Messenger of Allah’s affection toward the farm laborers. (This prohibition is not general, since most forms of farming are permitted in the *Shari‘a*.)

In a similar vein, many people were prevented from excessive fasting on grounds of the Messenger of Allah’s affection for them. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr reports that Allah’s Messenger once told him, "I have been informed that you fast daily and you observe optional [*nafl*] prayer throughout the night.” He replied, “This is indeed the case." Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) thereupon said, “Do not do this. You should fast on certain days and refrain on certain days. You should perform *salat* during a portion of the night and sleep during a portion of it as well. Your body also has a right over you. If you continue doing as I advised you, you will nor get tired Your family also has a right over

you. Set aside some time for them during the day and night. Your friends, relatives and visitors also have a right over you. Therefore fasting only three days a month and completing the recitation of the Holy Qur'an only once every month will suffice for you."

Abdullah replied, "Oh Messenger of Allah! I can massage more than that." Following repeated requests, the Messenger of Allah finally relented and said, "Fine! I will permit you no more than the fast of Dawud: You may fast every alternate day and no more. Also you are prohibited From completing the Holy Qur'an once every seven days."[33]

This hadith has been transmitted with slight variations in its text in the various books of hadith. According to the version mentioned in the *Mishkat al-Masabih* on the authority of Imam Bukhari, the hadith prohibits perpetual fasting. At the end of the narration, what else save affection for 'Abdullah had prompted Allah's Messenger (PBUH) to permit him to fast the fast of Dawud (i.e. to fast every alternate day)? This is why 'Abdullah used to lament in his old and feeble age, 'If only I had taken heed of the advice of Allah's Messenger."[34]

***Compelling Interpretations***

There are many other hadiths which were conveyed as threats or admonishments. For example, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "There no fast for one who observes perpetual fasting [*sawm al-dahr*]."[35] According to some scholars, this hadith is more of an admonishment to abstain from perpetual fasting. It does not mean that (one who does this) will not be rewarded for it, or that his fasting is null and void.

Likewise, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) cautions, "A believer [*mu'min*] does not remain a believer while he is committing adultery nor does he remain a believer while he is stealing"[36] Of a similar nature is the hadith wherein Allah's Messenger (PBUH) says, "Whosoever consumes alcohol, his *salat* is not accepted for forty days."[37]

The aforementioned reasons for the differences of narrations were merely mentioned as examples. This category (of differences) is not confined to these examples only. All I wish to prove at this juncture is that the basis for which these differences came about is indispensable. All the reasons for the differences cannot be accommodated in this brief assignment nor, due to my helplessness, do I wish to cover them all. The objective of this assignment has been achieved up to a certain degree, in that the apparent contradictions in the statements of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) are all explainable. From among the many reasons for these differences, some have been explained above as examples.

At this point, I would like to discuss other reasons for these differences which surfaced in the era of the Companions, and the consequent differences that appeared. I will also present a few examples from these eras. Before I go further, though, I would like to bring up an unfounded objection (which normally comes up) at this juncture.

## Other Aspects

# TWO CATEGORIES OF LAWS

An objection which normally appears at this juncture is this: since Allah's Messenger (PBUH) was sent to this world to convey injunctions of Islamic law [*Shari 'a*], and this was a primary reason for his advent, why did he not convey all the injunctions of *Shari 'a* in complete detail during his lifetime? This would have averted the confusion and anxiety of contradictory narrations and other such issues.

On the outside, this objection looks quite clear-cut and sensible, but in reality it is unfounded and baseless. This objection stems from a lack of insight into the laws of *Shari 'a*. In actual fact it is due to an intense degree of affection toward this *Umma* that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) did not regulate and gather all of the by-laws of the *Shari'a*, since this would have caused hardships to the *Umma*. Instead, he divided the laws of the *Shari'a* into two categories: a set of laws in which contemplation, deliberation and discussion has been abhorred, and a second set of laws in which differences of opinions have been declared a source of Allah's mercy. Thus, every action, even if the action is incorrect, can potentially earn the reward of Allah, provided that the error is not due to one's negligence.

In essence, the *Shari'a* has divided all the laws into two basic categories: the definitive [*qat'i*] and the speculative [*zanni*]. *Qat'i* is a reference to those laws which are not left to the intellectual capabilities of man. They are all explicit, definitive, and unequivocal, and man has no right to reinterpret or to re-expound these laws. Anyone reinterpreting these laws is in error and would be considered misguided. The second set of laws is such that the *Shari'a* has placed no constraints upon them. In fact, this set of laws has taken into account the weakness of the *Umma* and is intended to make things simpler for the people. The one who reinterprets these laws differently and does not practice them will not be considered misguided. The first set of laws is referred to as fundamental beliefs [*i'tiqadat*], while the second set is referred to as by-laws or derived laws [*juz'iyyat* or *far'iyyat*].

Under the category of by-laws, the *Shari'a* did not place any constraints. If all the fundamentals, compulsions, etc., were explained in complete detail by Allah's Messenger (PBUH) , everything in this category would have also been incorporated in the first category. This would have consequently placed hardships on the *Umma*. Plus, even if this was the case, it would still have been extremely difficult to preserve these laws from differences of opinion. Differences would still have occurred because all statements constituting the by-Laws of *Shari'a* are issued through the medium of words. Words are multi-facetted and can have multiple interpretations. Hence, the Shari'a has divided the laws into the two categories of fundamentals and by-laws, and made it strictly prohibited to debate on the first category as is evident from the following verse:

Allah has established for you the same religion as that which He enjoined upon Nuh, and that which We had revealed to you and that which We have enjoined upon lbrahim, Musa and 'Isa; namely that you should remain steadier in religion and make no divisions therein. (Surat al-Shura 42,13).

This verse sternly prohibits any debate in religion [*din*] with regard to the first category of injunctions. However, differences in the second category are considered a source of mercy upon mankind. This is why there has been no prohibition on this type of debate and differences, as evident from the scores of incidents which occurred during the blessed era of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). I will present just two examples of this nature.

In one example, Imam Nisai (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates on the authority of Tariq an incident of two Companions who were both in need of a compulsory bath [*ghusl*]. Due to a lack of water, one of them refrained completely from performing *salat* while the other performed *tayammum* [dry ablution]. On their return to Allah's Messenger, he approved both of their actions.



Similarly, on another occasion, the Messenger of Allah commanded a group of Companions to perform their 'Asr prayer at the dwellings of Banü Qurayza. Some of them took the command to perform the 'Asr prayer at Banü

Qurayza literally and acted accordingly. Even though their *salat* was delayed from its actual time, they nonetheless executed what they felt was the meaning of the command issued to them by Allah's Messenger (PBUH). However, another group regarded this as a command to reach Banu Qurayza in haste (i.e. by 'Asr time). Hence, they performed their Asr *salat* at its proper time, en-route to Banü Qurayza. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) did not object to the actions of either of the two groups.[39] This incident is mentioned in detail in *Sahih al-Bukhari*. There are numerous other incidents of this nature.

## FUNDAMENTAL AND SUBSIDIARY DIFFERENCES

In short, there is a vast distinction between fundamental differences and secondary differences. Those who consider these secondary differences equal to the fundamental differences and apply the Qur'anic verses and hadiths about the evil of differences to these secondary differences are either ignorant or fooled into believing otherwise. There is no doubt that the *Shari'a* has placed great ease and flexibility on these secondary differences. If this was not the case, the *Umma* would have been encumbered with difficulties beyond their endurance. This was one of the reasons why Imam Milik (may Allah be pleased with him) declined to comply with Caliph Harün al-Rashid's request for him to hang a copy of his *Muwatta'* upon the wall of the Ka'ba and issue a command for everyone to adhere to it, in order to ensure that people did not differ over religious [*dini*] matters. Imam Malik was requested repeatedly to do this but he emphatically refused each time and declared:

The Companions also differed in subsidiary issues and all of them were considered to be correct. Their statements and schools of thought are practiced throughout the world and there is no sense in prohibiting the people from other schools of thought.

Similarly, when Caliph Mansur went for *hajj*, he requested Imam Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) to give him a copy of all his works so that he (*Mansur*) could have them published and dispatched to all the parts of the Islamic world. Mansur wanted all the Muslims to adhere to uniform code of Islamic law. Imam Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) replied,

O leader of the faithful! Do not ever think of doing this. The people have in their possession the hadiths and the statements of the Companions which they are adhering to. Allow them to continue accordingly.

## DIFFERENCES: A SOURCE OF MERCY

This is a desired objective of the statement of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) wherein he says, "The differences of my *Umma* are a source of mercy," The fact that these differences of opinion area source of mercy is quite obvious. Every Imam has some difference or another on subsidiary issues of *Shari'a*. In addition, it is permissible to issue a religious verdict (*fatwa*) according to the school of thought of another Imam provided there is a legal and juridical (*shar'i*) need to do so. However if there were no allowances for such differences of opinion, it would not be permissible to sway from one ruling to another even if there was a dire need for it.

In short, the differences of opinion found among the Imams are religiously required, and the benefits of them are manifold. Allah willing, if time assists me in my endeavors, I will mention this topic in more detail while discussing the differences of opinion of the third era. It is not my objective of discussion at this point. Those who have some inclination toward jurisprudence [*fiqhi*] will surely understand the aforementioned benefits of the differences of opinion.

### *Prejudice toward any School*

'Allama Sha'rani (may Allah be pleased with him) writes in his book *Al-Mizan,*

'If you view it with an impartial eye, you will clearly realize that all the four Imams and their followers are on the path of divine guidance. Once you have studied this carefully, you will not have objections against the followers of any of the Imams. It will be firmly impressed on your mind that all the four schools of thought are part and parcel of the *Shari'a*, and that the contradictory statements of the various Imams are a source of divine mercy. Allah is All-Knowing and All-Wise and His expediency demanded that things should turn out as they have become, if Allah abhorred this difference of opinion, then He would have forbidden it as He had forbidden debating on the fundamental teachings of the *Shan'a*. If you regard the subsidiary differences of opinion as the same as fundamental differences in religion [*din*], you will land yourself in an abyss of destruction because Allah's Messenger (PBUH) concluded that differences in subsidiary issues of religion are a source of divine mercy.

In actual fact, the various opinions of the Imams are all extracted from the hadiths. The only difference between the opinions of the Imams is that, where one Imam considers a certain juridical [*shar'i*] injunction as compulsory, another would consider the same as optional. By this statement, I am in no way implying that one is at liberty so select the opinion of whichever Imam one fancies—either the compulsory or the optional. Some students were duped into believing that this is what I meant. This is most definitely not what I mean, as it would render the entire religion a plaything. What I am saying is that each of the Imams has selected one of the two options before him. However, whichever one they select, their followers are bound to adhere to it.

Whatever I have mentioned about the Imams I have not said simply because I cherish favorable thoughts about them. On the contrary, I have established good thoughts toward them as a result of extensive research into their opinions, deductions, inferences, and corroborating statements. Whoever does not believe me should study my book, *Al-Manhaj al-mubin fi adillat al-mujtahidin* [Clear Way in the Proofs of the Mujtahids}. I have assembled all the corroborating statements of the various Imams in that book and, consequently, established that they were all divinely guided.

The fact of the matter is that as long as one does not cross all the stations of the spiritual path (*suluk*) through the companionship and direction of an accomplished spiritual guide [*shaykh kamil*], the complete reality of this, as it should be understood, will not be exposed to him. Hence, if you wish to savor its taste, you should also proceed to an accomplished spiritual guide and exert yourself in order to acquire the reality of these metters. This is not a fabrication from myself, but an established reality confirmed by the statements of the learned elders [*masha'ikh*].'

Shaykhh Muhyi 'l-Din ibn 'Arabi writes in his book *Futuhat al-Makkiyya*, "When a person is bound to a particular school of thought and he also progresses in the field of spirituality at the very summit he reaches a sea (of consciousness) through which all the Imams have passed. At that time a person realizes that all the schools of thought are on the right path. This can be likened to a Prophet who, once he receives divine revelation [*wahy*], has a good view of all the other religions as well.'

This priceless treatise of Imam Sha'rani (may Allah be pleased with him), which runs into almost a hundred pages, is worth writing in gold. His topic is extremely beneficial in fact; the entire work is worth translating.

In short, what I wish to say is that the differences of opinion found among the Imams which appear to be disunity are in actual fact not disunity. Whatever their stages of differences, they are indispensable and their absence would have been a burden on the *Umma*. Furthermore, since their differences of opinion stem from the differences in narrations, there was a religious [*dini*] need so have the narrations also revealed with some amount of ambiguity. If these juridical laws were conclusively revealed like the fundamental tenets of faith, there would be no scope for the Imams to have any differences. In that case, any debate of the Imams would have been a source of misguidance and the lack of debate would have caused untold hardship to the community at large.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that a person is at liberty to infer and draw conclusions from the texts of the Qur'an or hadiths according to his own understanding, as this would lead him astray. Such a difference of opinion is not

sound. The only difference of opinion which is reputable is that which is subjected to judicial [*shari'*] maxims and principles. For instance, in the incident which dealt with bathing when in a seminally defiled state [*janaba*], Allah's Messenger (PBUH) considered the actions of those who had speculated based to their own understanding as ignorance.

# PART TWO

# THE ERA OF THE COMPANIONS & THE FOLLOWERS

## Reason 1

## Narration by Meaning

Apart from the reasons mentioned regarding the first era, there were many other factors during the era of the Companions and Followers that contributed to the conflict in narrations. This conflict was bound to occur.

One of the foremost reasons for these conflicting narrations is due to narration by meaning and not narration by actual text. In other words, people used to narrate the hadiths in their own words and not in the actual words of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). Ibn Sirin says, "I used to hear one hadith from ten people and all of them used to differ in the text but they used to be unanimous in the meaning."
Allama Dhahabi (may Allah be pleased with him) quotes the statement of Abu Hãtim in his book *Tadhkirat al-huffaz:* "I have not seen any of the hadith narrators, besides Qubaysa, memorizing and relating the exact words of the hadiths (as they had heard them) without any change whatsoever."
Allama Suyuti (may Allah be pleased with him) has dealt with this topic in detail in his book *Tadrib al-rawi,* wherein he also transmits the various opinions of the scholars on this issue of whether or not narrating the meaning of the hadith instead of the actual text is permissible. However, Allãma Suyuti says that all four Imams have unanimously agreed that narrating a hadith by meaning instead of the actual text is permissible, provided the other prerequisites are found in the narrator. He based its permissibility on a hadith narrated by Tabarani and Ibn Manda in which Abdullah ibn Sulayman once told the Messenger of Allah that he was unable to narrate the Messenger's

exact words. The Messenger (PBUH) permitted him to change the text of the hadith, provided he narrated the meaning of the hadith in full.[40]

***The Difficulty of Narrating by Memory***

It is also very difficult to remember all the actual words of the hadiths. On one occasion Makhul asked Wãthila ibn al-Asqa to narrate a hadith that he heard from Allah's Messenger (PBUH) without adding or subtracting any words and without a doubt or error in the text of the hadith. Wãthila asked him, "Does any one of you know the Qur'an by heart?" Makhül replied, "We do not know the Qur'an so well that we would not make any mistakes whatsoever." Upon this Wathila commented, "The Holy Qur'an is written out and preserved in its original form. In spite of this, you tend to make errors in the letter "*fa*" and "*wãw*" (i.e. they are sometimes interchanged), etc. So how can I narrate a hadith in the manner you have requested? In fact, some of the hadiths I have only heard once. When it comes to narrating the hadiths of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) consider the narration of the meaning as sufficient (and do not be overly concerned with the actual text)." Waki' (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "If there were no (allowance for) narrating the meaning of the hadiths instead of the actual text, the entire nation of Muslims would have been destroyed."

According to Ibn al-Arabi, narrating the meaning of the hadiths rather than their text was permissible only for the Companions, and not for anybody else. However, other hadith scholars [*muhaddithin*] like Qasim ibn Muhammad, Ibn Sirin, Zuhri, Ibrãhim (al-Nakh'ay), Sha'bi, among others have permitted this for all narrators, albeit with certain conditions.

'This was one of the main reasons why a great multitude of the Followers [*tabi'in*] abstained from attributing a hadith directly to the Messenger of Allah. Instead, they used to narrate the hadith in the form of an injunction.

Among others, the aforementioned issue is one of the chief reasons why Imam Abü Hanifa (may Allah be pleased with him) refrained from attributing the hadiths directly to Allah's Messenger (PBUH) , along with the fact that it is dangerous to attribute (a hadith) directly to him. It is possible that in narrating the meaning instead of the actual text, one may attribute something incorrectly to him and consequently become liable to severe punishment.

***Cautioun in Textual Narrations***

Other great scholars were also very cautious about attributing the hadiths directly to Allah's Messenger (PBUH) because it was extremely difficult to abstain from any form. of error or mistakes while narrating the actual (text of the) hadiths.

Even a personality like Ibn Mas'üd was extremely cautious in attributing any hadith directly to Allah's Messenger (PBUH). He was one of the greatest of the Companions, about whom Abu Musa al-Ash'ari says, "He (Abdullah' ibn Mas'ud) used to frequent the house of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) to such an extent that we were initially under the impression that he was a family member."[41] Allah's Messenger (PBUH) even granted him permission to listen, to his personal secrets. During his lifetime, the Messenger of Allah appointed him as a teacher of the Holy Qur'an. The Messenger (PBUH) once said, "If I were to appoint anyone as a leader [*amir*] would have appointed Ibn Mas'ud as a leader."[42]

Hadiths like this explaining the virtues of Ibn Mas'ud are rarely found narrated in favor of the other Companions. This is why Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah be pleased with him) decided to make the religious verdicts [*fatawa*] of Ibn Mas'ud the basis of (much of) his jurisprudence [*fiqh*]. We will explain this in detail at another time.

What I wish to make clear at this point is that in spite of his excessive knowledge, his lofty virtues, and his numerous hadiths, he rarely attributed the hadiths directly to Allah's Messenger (PBUH). Abu 'Amr al-Shaybani says, "I stayed with 'Abdullãh ibn Mas'üd for a period of one year and I did not hear him attributing any hadith to the Messenger of Allah. lf he did, per chance, say Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said' in regards to any sentence, his entire body would tremble (out of fear of attributing something incorrectly to him)."

Anas, the special attendant [*khadim khass*] of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) says, "If I did not have a fear of slipping up, I would have narrated many hadiths that I had heard from Allah's Messenger (PBUH). However, I fear that if I narrate those hadiths, I will fall under the threat of punishment"

Suhayb says: "I will be able to narrate the incidents that took place in our battles while we were with Allah's Messenger (PBUH) However, for me to narrate that 'this is what Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said,' I will not be able to do that."

In short, there are many such incidents which highlight the Companions' caution when it came to attributing the hadiths to Allah's Messenger (PBUH). If Allah wills, I will deal with this in more detail when we discuss the allegations against Imam Abü Hanifa (may Allah be pleased with him) regarding his knowledge of hadith. At this point, I have mentioned a few incidents to elucidate on the fact that, since it was difficult to narrate the hadiths word for word, the narrators related the meanings of the hadiths instead. I have also explained why the senior Companions refrained from attributing anything directly to Allah's Messenger (PBUH).

Since we have established the permissibility of narrating (a hadith) with meaning instead of narrating with the actual text, we have also established that differences in those narrations are also inevitable. Due to a difference in interpretation, differences in meaning are also bound to appear. This is one of the reasons why Abü Bakr, in his speech after the death of Allah's Messenger (PBUH), forbade the people from narrating hadiths, as this would have created differences and contention among the community.

## Reason 2

# ABROGATION

One of the other reasons for differences in narrations during the era of the Companions and Followers was that many a time Allah's Messenger (PBUH) would say something which later became abrogated. However, some of the people who heard the initial injunction were probably not present to hear its abrogation and thus continued narrating what they heard (before the abrogation). For example, there are many narrations which permit wiping [*masah*] over the turban. However, Imam Muhammad al-Shaybãni (may Allah be pleased with him) writes in his Muwatta "As far as we are aware, wiping over the turban was permissible at the very beginning of Islam and it was later prohibited."

Similarly, he narrates the statement of Abü Sa'id al-Khudri' that bathing [*ghusl*] is compulsory upon every mature person on Fridays. However, Ibn Abbãs said, "This compulsion was confined to the beginning of Islam only. At that time the people used to work in their fields themselves and were unable to employ any servants due to extreme poverty. Their garments were made of thick woolen material at that time. While toiling in their fields, due to excessive perspiration, their clothing used to give off an offensive odor. The *masjid* in those times was also very small. When all the people used to gather in the *masjid* for the Friday prayer, the odor given off by some people

used to be very offensive to other attendees. This is why they were commanded to have a bath and apply perfume, etc. Thereafter, Allah provided ease for the Muslims and the *masjid* was also extended. Hence, the compulsion of bathing no longer remains."[43]

There is also a comparable narration from Abü Hurayra which says that the *wudü'* is nullified if one consumes anything cooked over the fire.[44] Contrary to this, Jabir' relates, "Toward the latter part of his life, the Messenger of Allah's habit was not to make *wudu'* after eating something cooked over the fire."[45] This hadith clearly shows that the compulsion of *wudü'* was abrogated. However, Imam Abü Dãwud (may Allah be pleased with him) disagrees with this interpretation of the hadith. This is why we also mentioned another interpretation of this hadith previously [see page 15]: the word *wudu'* in the hadith of Abu Hurayra (as explained above) refers to the washing of the hands and the mouth and nor to the technical meaning of wudu'.

## Reason 3

# THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN ERROR

The scholars are unanimous in their view that the Companions were all reliable narrators [*'adul*]. They can neither be criticized nor censured. In his *Isaba*, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani describes this as the unanimous opinion of the People of the Sunna [*Ahl al-Sunna*].

However, everyone is afflicted with forgetfulness, errors and other human shortcomings. Hence, there is a possibility of making a mistake while narrating a hadith.

I have already mentioned the statement of Imrän ibn Husayn, in which he says, "By Allah! I know so many hadiths that I can go on narrating for a very long time. However, I am restrained by the fact that there are some Companions who heard the hadiths from Allah's Messenger (PBUH) like I did, but in spire of this they are prone to making mistakes while narrating. Obviously, they are not doing this intentionally. If I had to narrate, I fear I would also fall into the same abyss."

Likewise, whenever Ali would hear a hadith from anyone other than Abu Bakr, he used to make the narrator swear an oath that he had reported it exactly the way he heard it from Allah's Messenger (PBUH).

The inevitable existence of these types of errors explains why, among other things, it is incumbent to compare narrations with one another to determine if there are any errors. If there are any contradictions on the part of the narrator, the contradictions will be resolved.

The specialists in the field of hadith have prohibited the people from acting upon the hadiths directly until they have the capability to distinguish between the authentic and the unauthentic, between the correct and the incorrect, and between the truth and the fabricated.

There are scores of examples of such errors in the books of hadith. One such example involves a narration from Abdullah ibn Umar which states that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) performed *'umra* in the month of Rajab. When 'A'isha heard of his account, she said; "Ibn Umar has forgotten. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) did not perform any *'umra* in the month of Rajab."[46]

In addition, we have already previously mentioned the case in which Abdullah ibn Umar said, "The deceased is punished in his grave if his family cries or mourns over him." His report was rejected by 'A'isha, who insisted that Ibn Umar had erred in narrating the hadith. According to her, the hadith is as follows: "On one occasion, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) passed by a deceased Jewish woman who was being mourned over by her family members. He remarked; 'These people are crying over her whereas she is being inflicted with the punishment of the grave!" According to 'A'isha , their crying had nothing to do with her punishment.

Likewise, Abu Hurayra says if a person is in need of a compulsory bath [*ghusl*] at the time of true dawn [*subh sadiq*], he is not permitted to fast on that specific day. He narrates this (ruling) from Allah's Messenger (PBUH) , and this was also his personal ruling [*fatwa*] on the issue. Such narrations are compiled in detail in *Fath al-Bari*, the commentary on *Sahih al-Bukhari*, under the chapter dealing with fasting. However, in opposition to this, 'A'isha and Umm Salama report that at times the Messenger (PBUH) used to be in need of bathing [*ghusl*] at dawn, but he would fast on those days as well.[47]

Similarly, a group of narrators relate that the *salat* is nullified if a woman or dog passes in front of one performing *salät*. 'A'isha rejected this view, saying this narration is incorrect.[48]

Finally, Fatima bint Qays narrated that a woman who has been issued an irrevocable divorce has no right to claim food, clothing, or shelter from her husband. When Umar heard this he remarked, "How can I relinquish a Qur'anic verse for the statement of one woman?[49]

To sum up, one of the reasons for the contradiction of narrations stems from the differences in how the hadiths were preserved. At times, those narrating the hadiths tended to slip up in their narrations. This is not impossible. Sometimes, even the most intelligent person can become confused with comprehending, transmitting, or relating the meaning of a statement. There are many such cases in which the narrators erred in spite of being reliable and truthful. This is why the scholars have laid down stringent rules for accepting the narration of a lone narrator. One of the rules is to compare the narration with other narrations. If it is conforming to the juridical principles, it will be accepted; otherwise it will not.

The aforementioned incident of Umar also supports one of the principles of the Hanafi school. According to the Hanafis, the hadith that is in greater conformance with the Qur'an will be awarded preference over the hadith that is not as conforming to it, even if the latter has relatively more reliable narrators or there are other narrations supporting it.

All of these incidents also verify what I have repeatedly indicated: that the only person who can practice upon the hadith directly is the one who has the capacity to recognize right from wrong. It is quite bewildering to note that to determine the purity of gold, one avails himself of the services of a bullion dealer, but to practice upon the hadiths, he considers the services of an analyst as dispensable. The one who does this is quite proud of his own knowledge in spite of his ignorance. We beseech the assistance of Allah alone.

## Reason 4

# LOVE FOR ALLAH'S MESSENGER (PBUH)

Companions were the real devotees and ardent followers of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). They were prepared to lay down a hundred lives for every action of his. They were wholly befitting of the poem:

*If the Almighty had to bestow me with unlimited hearts,*

*I would have sacrificed a hundred for every action.*

The relationship the Companions enjoyed with Allah's Messenger (PBUH) cannot be expressed in words. Every one of the most seemingly trivial incidents that transpired while they were in the company of the Messenger (PBUH) is a testament to their devotion to him.

Anas narrates, "The Messenger of Allah passed by the house of a Companion who had added an additional room to it. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) asked who the house belonged to. On being informed, the Messenger (PBUH) did not utter a word. When the Companion in question appeared before Allah's Messenger (PBUH) , he declined to reply to his *salam*. The Companion made *salam* many times, but to no avail. When informed by the others about what had transpired earlier, he immediately went home and demolished the extended room. Above that, he did not even inform Allah's Messenger (PBUH) of his action: out of shame and remorse, he refrained from informing him. The Messenger of Allah only learnt of it when he happened to pass by the same house on another occasion."

The Companions used to accept even the outward meaning of the words of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). They at times were quite aware that this was not what he meant, but taking the literal words into account, they used to adhere to it.

Once, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) pointed to one of the doors of the masjid [*al-Nabawi*] and remarked, "It would have been a good idea to reserve this door for the exclusive use of the women." From then on, Abdullah ibn Umar never entered the *masjid* by that door.

Likewise, when Abu Sa'id al-Khudri was on his death-bed, he called for a new set of clothes and put them on. He thereafter said, "I heard Allah's Messenger (PBUH) saying that a person will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment- with the clothing he dies in."[50] On the contrary; it has been established by famous hadiths that everyone will be resurrected naked on the Day of Judgment. This is discussed under the commentary of the Quranic verse, "As We commenced the initial creation, so shall We return it" (*Surat al-Anbiya* 21:104) This meaning is established on the grounds of many hadiths. It would be preposterous to suggest that Abü Said al-Khudri was unaware of the meaning, of the hadiths. He was aware of it, but he chose to act on the literal meaning of the hadith and wear the new clothes.

The books of hadith are replete with such examples. On the surface, these examples seem dubious, but one who has "had a sip from the fountain of love." will clearly understand the importance of even the apparent worth of his beloved, above and beyond the consideration of their actual meaning. This was one of the main reasons why the Companions used to narrate even the abrogated hadiths. -

On the outside, it seems senseless to propagate abrogated hadiths (but such was their, love for the Messenger (PBUH) and his words). Similarly, there are many such hadiths which were narrated in spite of the fact that their apparent meanings were unanimously declared obsolete.

From this, we understand why the hadith scholars have laid down such stringent rules and regulations for acquiring the science of hadith, and why they were so cautious before saying or writing anything on this subject. They have even laid down principles and conditions for the seekers of this science. The rules and regulations set out for the teachers and hadith scholars are even more stringent.

***The Advice of Imam Bukhari to the Seeker of Hadith***

Even though the issue at hand is growing more long-winded, spurred by the necessity of the present discussion, I will narrate a remarkable quote from Imam Bukhãri (may Allah be pleased with him) which will enlighten the reader on the diligence required to become a seeker of hadith, let alone an accomplished *shaykh* or scholar of hadith [*muhaddith*].

Allama Suyuti relates (through his chain) that Muhammad ibn Ahmad said: "When Abu 'l-Abbas Walid ibn Ibrahim was deposed as the chief justice of Rayy (formally of the great cities of Persia located a few miles from Tehran) and he came to Bukhãrã, my teacher, Abü Ibrãhim Al-Khatalli took me with him to see Walid. My teacher requested him to narrate those hadiths to me which he had heard from his teachers [*mashä'ikh*]. He replied, 'I have not heard anything from them.' My teacher was quite shocked and remarked, 'How can you say that you have not heard anything from them whereas you are a deeply-read scholar?'

Walid then related his story saying, 'When I became a rational and mature adult and I developed a passion toward the science of hadith, I went to Imam Bukhãri (may Allah be pleased with him) and explained my intentions to him. He advised me thus, "Son, before you set out to pursue any field, make sure you are well-grounded with its prerequisites and demands. And remember that a person cannot become a perfect scholar in the science of hadith [*muhaddith*] until and unless he writes four things with four other things, which are as indispensable as four things, which resemble four other things. (He must write these things) in four times, with four conditions, in four places, upon four things, from four types of people, and for four objectives. All of these four-angled things can only be achieved with another four things coupled with another four. Once all these things are achieved, four things will become insignificant before him and he will be tried with four other things. If he exercises patience in these four trials, Allah will honor him with four things in this world and award him four things in the hereafter."

I said, "May Allah have mercy upon you. Please explain these four-angled things for me." He said, "Certainly. The four things he has to write are:

(1) the statements and commands of Allah's Messenger (PBUH).

(2) the sayings of the Companions and their relative ranks.

(3) the sayings of the Followers and their ranks (i.e. who among them are reliable and who are not), and

(4) the conditions of all the narrators who narrate hadiths.

These (four pieces of information) must be written together with the following four things:

(1) the actual names of the narrators,

(2) their appellations or titles [*kuna*],

(3) their places of residence, and

(4) their dates of birth and death (to determine whether the narrator actually met the people he has narrated from).

(These are indispensable to him) just (as four things are necessary with four other things:)

(1) as praises [*tahmid*] of Allah (are necessary) with the *khutba*,

(2) as salutations [*salawat*], (are necessary) with mention of the name of Allah's Messenger (PBUH).

(3) as (the recitation of) *bismillah* (is necessary) with a *süra* (of the Qur'an), and

(4) as the *takbir* (is necessary) with the *salat*.

These resemble four other things (which are names of four categories of hadith):

(1) the *musnadat* [narrations traceable to the Messenger],

(2) the *mursalat* [narrations transmitted by a Follower from the Messenger directly without a Companion in between],

(3) the *mawqufat* [narrations traceable only to a Companion ], and

(4) the *maqtu'at* [narrations traceable only to a Follower].

(These things must all be written) jn four times:

(1) in his childhood,

(2) in his age of discernment (i.e. close to maturity),

(3) in his youth, and

(4) in his old age.

(In other words, he must continue acquiring hadiths at all times throughout every stage of his life? They must be written) under four conditions:

(1) while his is occupied,

(2) while he is free,

(3) in his poverty, and

(4) in his affluence.

(In other words, he must diligently pursue the knowledge of these things no matter what his circumstances may be. This is done) at four places:

(1) in mountainous terrain,

(2) on the seas,

(3) in cities, and

(4) in rural areas.

(In other words, he must endeavour to acquire this science from the right teacher, no matter where that teacher is located. He writes what he has acquired) upon four things:

(1) upon stones,

(2) upon shells,

(3) upon skins, and

(4) upon bones.

(In other words, even when be does not find paper he will continue recording it somewhere) until he finds the paper upon which to preserve it. (He acquires it from four different types of people :)

(1) from his seniors,

(2) from his juniors,

(3) from his counterparts, and

(4) from the books of his father, provided he has firm conviction that these are his father's books.

(In other words, he endeavours to acquire this science in every way possible without feeling ashamed to obtain it even from his juniors. He has four objectives for doing all of these things :)

(1) to acquire (this science) solely for the pleasure of Allah ,

(2) to practice upon the hadiths which confirm to the verses of the Holy Qur'an,

(3) to propagate (the science) to those who seek it, and

(4) to write it out so that it can be a source of guidance to those who will come after him.

Thereafter, the aforementioned four things cannot be acquired (unless he has first acquired) four other things that are part of human acquisition:

(1) the knowledge of how to read and write,

(2) lexicography and vocabulary,

(3) morphology, and

(4) syntax,

Together with four other things that are not of human acquisition, but are bestowed by Allah :

(1) sound health,

(2) ability,

(3) an ardent desire for learning, and

(4) a retentive memory.

Once all the aforementioned four-angled things are attained by him, then four things will become insignificant before him:

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He will then be afflicted with four things:

(1) his enemies will rejoice at his distress,

(2) his friends will reproach him,

(3) the ignorant will taunt him, and

(4) the scholars [*ulamà*] will be jealous of him.

Once he exercises patience on these calamities, Allah will honor him with four things in this world:

(1) the honor of contentment [*qana'a*],

(2) conviction coupled with awe and dignity,

(3) the pleasure of sacred knowledge [*'ilm*] and

(4) eternal life.

(On top of that,) Allah will honor him with four things in the hereafter:

(1) the honor of intercession on behalf of whomever he pleases,

(2) the shade of the throne of Allah on the day when there will be no shade available except the shade of His throne,

(3) the privilege to provide water to whomsoever he pleases from the pool of Muhammad [*al-Kawthar*], and

(4) close proximity with the Prophets [*anbiya'*] in the Highest of the High Places [*a'lã 'illiyyin*].

So now, my son, I have told you whatever I have heard from my teachers [*mashä'ikh*]. Now you have the choice to either pursue this field or to abstain from it."

These are the principles and rules Imam Bukhäri has laid out for every individual who wishes to become a hadith scholar or a student of hadith. We should take heed of Imam Bukhãri's advice and hold firmly onto it. In actual fact, the science of hadith is even more difficult to attain than Imam Bukhãri (may Allah be pleased with him) describes.

Our present times of extreme negligence and laziness, where the maximum extent of education in this science is (normally limited to studying) the six authentic books of hadith [*sihah sitta*] for one to call himself a hadith scholar, can be likened to "a monkey who has a bit of turmeric powder and wishes to be called a grocer." The extent to which this group of half-baked *molwis* [scholars graduating from *madrasas*] has made a mock of our religion [*din*] cannot be found in the time of our predecessors, even if we were to search for it. The main cause for this current degeneration among the scholars stems from our confidence in our virtues and our reliance upon our defective and unsound knowledge. In fact, the jurists of the later centuries [*muta'akhkhirin*] have prohibited us from issuing any religious verdicts [*fatawa*] based on our own opinions. Instead, they have advised us to transcribe the verdicts from similar religious verdicts of the past. But alas! In these times, even the most intricate of scholastic issues, let alone ordinary concerns, have become subjected to the people's whims and fancies. To Allah alone do we complain and He alone is the Helper. -

This subject is out of our present range of discussion, so I will now return to our previous discussion. In the second era, from among the numerous reasons for the differences of opinions, I have sufficed by mentioning a few reasons. During the times of the Companions [*sahaba*], Followers [*tabi'in*], Followers of the Followers [*atba' al-tabi'in*], *mujtahid* Imams and the hadith scholars [*muhaddithin*], the reasons that led to differences of opinion increased. In other words, the further we moved away from the era of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) , the more the reasons for these differences also increased. This increase is quite rational because (as an Urdu expression goes) "The more the mouths, the more the statements."

## Reason 5

## EXCESSIVE LINKS BETWEEN NARRATORS

The fifth reason for differences is basically due to the excessive number of links in conveying the hadiths (between the time of the Messenger (PBUH) and the current era). The more the links in conveying the hadiths increased, the more the disparities between them increased. The reason for this is quite clear as well. If you relay a message to someone and there are many links involved in conveying the message, an inconsistency in the message is bound to occur. This is why the hadith scholars have considered a hadith with a smaller number of links as having a preferential factor over other hadiths. If Allah wills, I will explain this in detail at some other point. All I would say at this point is that an excessive number of links is a major cause for differences, a fact which one can determine logically, traditionally, practically and through sound discernment. According to the Hanafi school, the jurisprudence [*fiqh*] of Imam Abü Hanifa (may Allah be pleased with him) is awarded preference over the jurisprudence and statements of the other jurists and hadith scholars because, among other reasons, there are relatively fewer links between him and Allah's Messenger (PBUH). In order to clarify this, the dates of birth and death of the famous Imams are listed below:

| Imam | Birth | Death | Age |
|---|---|---|---|
| Abu Hanifa | 80 AH | 150 AH | 70 |
| Malik | 95 AH | 179 AH | 84 |
| Shafi'i | 150 AH | 204 AH | 54 |
| Ahmed bin Hanbal | 164 AH | 241 AH | 77 |
| Bukhari | 194 AH | 256 AH | 62 |
| Muslim | 204 AH | 261 AH | 57 |
| Abu Dawud | 202 AH | 275 AH | 73 |
| Tirmidhi | 209 AH | 279 AH | 70 |
| Nasa'i | 214 AH | 303 AH | 89 |
| Ibn Maja | 209 AH | 273 AH | 64 |

From this table, it is quite evident that since a period of two hundred years separates Allah's Messenger (PBUH) from Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim, there are bound to be many links between them. Contrast this with the era of Imam Malik and Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah be pleased with them): not even a period of one hundred years separates them from Allah's Messenger (PBUH).

Among other things, an excessive number of links is one of the causes for differences between narrations. Also, since the compilation of the various hadith books only began in the second century, there were relatively more narrators (at that time). This consequently brought about more differences in the wording of the narrations.

## Reason 6

# WEAK NARRATORS

The sixth reason is caused by the weakness of a narration. Due to the excessive number of links in a narration, a weak or unreliable narrator sometimes finds his way into the chain of narrators. Some narrators have a tendency to narrate something very different from what they heard, either due to a weak memory or due to some other disorder. Some narrators were such that their books or their memories could be relied upon, but due to some problem or other, they began making blunders in their narrations and narrating incorrectly. This is why the Imams of hadith have concluded that if a person wishes to practice upon a particular hadith, he should be well aware of the conditions of its narrator. This is also one of the major reasons why the learned elders [*mashã'ikh*] prohibit the ordinary laymen from practicing upon a hadith directly without the consent of the scholars. Imam Nawawi writes in his commentary on al-Arba'in:

"The person who wishes to prove anything on the basis, of any of the hadiths appearing in the Sunan collections of Imam Abü Dãwüd, Tirmidhi,. Nasã'i Ibn Mäja and in the *Musannafs* of Ibn Abi Shayba or Abd al-Razzaq' ibn al-Humans, and other hadith books which have many weak narrations and that person has tile capability to differentiate between the authentic and' unauthentic, (he) is still not permitted to employ a particular hadith to prove something until he verifies the continuation of the link of narrators and studies the conditions of its narrators.

If he does not possess these capabilities, he is compelled to fallow an Imam and he is not permitted to draw his own deductions from the hadiths, lest he should fall into falsehood."

At a later stage we will, Allah willing, explain in a more detail that most of the jurists and hadith. scholars have explicitly concluded that a person cannot be permitted to practice upon hadith directly if he does not have the capacity to differentiate between the reliable and unreliable, between the hadith that abrogates and the one that is abrogated, and between the general statements and the specifying statements of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) . This is so obvious that it does not require any explicit mention. How can a person who is unable to distinguish between the reliable and unreliable practice upon a narration?

## Reason 7

# FABRCATION OF HADITHS

The eera of the best of generations [*khayr al-qurun*] (i.e. the first three generations of Muslims), gave way to the era of falsehood and fabrications, as foretold by Allah's Messenger (PBUH). (At that time,) people began fabricating hadiths willfully. This is why many hadith scholars compiled books focusing only on fabricated hadiths (in order to expose them as unauthentic). Inspired by their vested interests, many of the fabricators used to concoct false hadiths. Consequently, whatever differences do occur in the accepted narrations will still be considered minimal (compared to what the situation could have been).

Ibn Lahi'a says, "There was a person who was once a leader [*shaykh*] of the Khawãrij (a deviated sect). He later received divine guidance to repent for all his wrongdoings. He advised, 'Before you accept a hadith, make sure you study the conditions of its narrators. When we (the Khawarij) wanted to propagate something, we used to fabricate a narration accordingly."

Hammãd ibn Salama (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates the statement of a Rãfidi (a member of the Shiite Twelver sect):

"Whenever any proposals used to be passed in our gatherings, we would fabricate a hadith accordingly."

Masih ibn Jahm narrates the incident of an innovator [*mubtadi*] who, when he repented, taking an oath, said: "We had fabricated many baseless narrations which you narrated from us, and we used to consider leading you astray to be a meritorious act."

The hadith scholars have recorded many similar statements. Hãfiz ibn Hajar (may Allah be pleased with him) has made particular mention of such incidents in his book *Lisan*.

Some Reasons for the Fabrication of hadiths

My objective in relating a few of these incidents is to point out that the fabricators themselves have confessed to concocting hadiths. Some of these fabricators used to fabricate solely for what they called the preservation of their ideology [*din*], such as the Rãfidis, the Khawãrij, etc. This is why the hadith scholars have laid down, among other principles, the rule stating that if a person is known to have inclinations to the Rafidi sect, his narrations regarding the household [*ahl al-bayt*] of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) will not be accepted.

Hammãd ibn Zayd said, "The hypocrites have fabricated fourteen thousand hadiths. One of them was Abd al-Karim ibn AbI al-Awja', who was hung in the time of (the Abbasi) Caliph Mahdi. While he was being hung he said, "I had fabricated four thousand hadiths in which I had made many unlawful things lawful and vice versa."

Some people used to fabricate hadiths merely to appease a king or a leader. Their stories are mentioned in detail in the books dealing with fabricated hadiths.

One of the categories of hadith which has come under criticism by the Imams includes the hadiths of the Sufis and the Preachers [*wã'izin*]. The Sufis, having good thoughts of all and sundry, readily accepted all types of narrations. Considering such narrations to be authentic, they used to transmit them to others. Since the Sufis were regarded as reliable people, the others in turn accepted their narrations. Imam Muslim (may Allah be pleased with him) has dealt with this topic extensively in the introduction to his Sahih.

Similar is the case of the "Hadiths of the Preachers." Many a time, preachers tended to fabricate hadiths merely to add a bit more spice to their lectures. In fact, some people believed that it was permissible to fabricate hadiths with intent to create a yearning in the hearts of the people toward the delights of the hereafter, or to instill fear in them of the catastrophes of doomsday. The narrations of the Preachers can also be found in the books dealing with fabricated hadiths.

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Yahya ibn Ma'in (may Allah be pleased with them) once went into a certain *masjid* to offer their *salat*. After the, salat, a preacher [*wa'iz*] began narrating hadiths attributed to these two Imams during his lecture. At the termination of his lecture, Yahya ibn Ma'in beckoned the preacher with his hand to come over to them. Under the false impression that he was being summoned to be rewarded, he came over to them. Yahya asked, "Who narrated these hadiths to you?" Once again, he mentioned their names. This ignorant fool did not even know who he was talking to. Since these two personalities were very famous in the world of hadith, he had simply made use of their good names.

Yahya said, "I am Yahya ibn Ma'in and this is Ahmad ibn Hanbal. We did not narrate these hadiths to you nor have we ourselves heard them (from someone else). The preacher then asked, "So you are Yahya ibn Ma'in?" "Surely that is me," replied Yahya. Upon this, he commented, "I always heard that Yahyã ibn Ma'in is a stupid fool but today this hearsay has been confirmed." "How is this confirmation possible?" asked Yahya. The preacher replied, "How can you be under the impression that the names 'Yahya ibn Ma'in and 'Ahmad ibn Hanbal' refer only to you two? I have heard hadiths from seventeen people by the names Yaliyã ibn Ma'in and Almad ibn Hanbal." While this was taking place, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal covered his face out of grief while the lecturer brushed the whole incident off as a joke and vanished.

This was one of the main reasons 'Umar placed constraints on lecturing during his time.

Abü Nuaym writes in *AI-Hilya* that Imam Zuhri said, "When there are two, three, or even four links in a chain of narrators (for a hadith), there is no problem with the narration. However, the moment the chain exceeds this number, it is better to remain silent."

Khabbab ibn al-Aratt narrates that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "The annihilation of the Bani Isrã'il was also triggered by their indulging in (baseless) sermons."

Hafiz Zayn al-Din al-Iraqi says, "One of the predicaments of the Preachers [*wa'izin*] is their tendency to narrate anything and everything before the masses. Often, the common laypeople are unable to fathom what is being said. This eventually leads to corrupt beliefs. When this is the case with true and authentic statements, what will then be the situation with fabricated statements?"

These were the reasons which prompted the scholars to compile special books on fabricated hadiths. Just as they compiled books on authentic hadiths, they also compiled books on fabricated hadiths, to ensure that those who came after them do not fall into a trap of deception.

## Reason 8

# TAMPERING WITH SOUND NARRATIONS.

This reason is also quite similar to the previous reason. Many a time, a narrator himself is trustworthy and reliable, but a malicious or antagonistic person tampers with his writings and brings about certain changes. This creates contradictions between the narrations; though the actual narrator himself is reliable. That is why his (other) narrations are not rejected: he confusion in his, narration only occurred because of some other conspiracy. 'Those who specialize in the principles of hadith study [*usul al-hadith*] have explicitly mentioned that Hammãd ibn Salama's books had been tampered with by his adopted son Abü al-Awjã'. Similarly, a hadith was added into the books of Mu'ammar by one of his nephews who converted to the Rafidi sect. There are many other such incidents mentioned in the books of the hadith scholars.

Apart from the aforementioned reasons, there are many other reasons for the differences of opinions, many of which are not worth delving into before a mainstream audience, who may not possess the full intellectual capacity needed to grasp these extremely complex issues. There is a risk that some people may develop evil thoughts of the hadiths due to their lack of understanding and awareness of juridical [*shar'i*] knowledge. 'Therefore, this discussion has remained brief.

The subject matter that we are dealing with is not so simple that it can be explained to all people, nor does every individual have the capacity to grasp its reality. This is why the scholars have prohibited the explanation of certain complicated issues to the laymen. Also, for this reason, our past scholars considered certain branches of knowledge mandatory even before one ventures into the field of hadith. This knowledge would develop a capacity to understand the hadiths.

The principles of hadith and jurisprudence [*usul al-hadith and usül al-fiqh*] are particularly singled out as prerequisites for the field of hadith. This background knowledge would enable a person to understand the reality of the hadiths, and he would be able to assess the truthfulness of the hadiths as well. Zayn al-Iraqi said, "One of the shortcomings of the Preachers [*wa'izin*] is their tendency to lecture to the laymen on issues which they (the laymen) are unable to understand. This in turn leads to corrupt beliefs." Abdulläh ibn Masüd says, "If you narrate such hadiths to a group of people who are unable to understand what you are saying, it will be a cause of turmoil [*fitna*]

to them." Imam Muslim (may Allah be pleased with him) has also mentioned this in the introduction to his book, and Imam Bukhãri (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates something to this effect from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

***Weak Hadiths in the Later Generations***

In our times, these have no longer remained very sensitive issues because the scholars of hadith have already sifted through the hadiths. They have separated the fabricated from the authentic and distinguished the reliable from the unreliable. For example, Imam Bukhãri selected the hadiths compiled in his book from a collection of six hundred thousand hadiths. Imam Muslim selected his from a collection of three hundred thousand, and Imam Abu Dãwüd from a total of five hundred thousand hadiths.

## SUMMARY OF THE DIFFERENCES IN THE SECOND ERA

At this juncture, I will now terminate the discussion of the differences of opinion in the second era. The main objective of this section was to demonstrate the reasons contributing to the vast differences found in the hadiths. Apart from these reasons being obvious, they are also intellectually compatible. Eighteen reasons were mentioned from the first era and eight from the second era.

As time went along and the links in the chains of narrators increased, differences in the actual texts of the narrations also increased. This is one of the main reasons why there are so few weak narrations; in fact there may not be any, in Imam Bukhäri's Collection. This was so because he lived during the second century. On the other hand, many weak narrations found their way into the book compiled by Imam Daraquni because he compiled his collection of hadiths at a much later stage. The era of the four mujtahid Imams predates even the era of Imam Bukhäri. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal was the last of the four Imams, and he preceded Imam Bukhâri. This is why there were fewer weak hadiths in their era, and there were not so many differences in the narrations as we have today.

In conclusion, due to the aforementioned reasons for the differences in narrations, and owing to the appearance of many weak narrations, the Imams of hadith and jurisprudence [*fiqh*] realized the urgent need for sifting through all the hadiths. They selected all the reliable [*mu'tabar*] narrations and rejected the fabricated and unreliable ones. Thereafter, they sifted through all the reliable narrations, separating the preponderant [*ràjih*] from the preponderated [*marjuh*] and the abrogating hadiths [*nasikh*] from the abrogated [*mansukh*]. However, such sifting through the volumes of hadiths was obviously bound to bring in its wake differences of opinion among the Imams. Every one of them realized that certain narrators may be acceptable to one of them and not acceptable to the others, or that a narrator may be considered reliable by one of them and not by the others. This is why the Imams of jurisprudence had differences in their views, and these led to differences in their schools of thought as well, a fact which is quite natural and acceptable. On that note, we will now briefly explain the reasons which led to the differences of opinion among the Imams of jurisprudence.

# PART THREE

# THE ERA OF THE MUJTAHID IMAMS & SOME PRINCIPLES OF HADITH AND JURISPRUDENCE

## THE MAIN REASON FOR THE DIFFEENCES BETWEEN THE IMAMS

As explained in the previous section, there were some changes made on the part of the narrators in reporting their hadiths. These changes were either intentional or unintentional, and occurred (within the narration itself) either in transmitting, or in a person's understanding of the narration. To account for this, a need was felt by the Imams of hadith and jurisprudence to assess all the narrations and choose some of the narrations over the others. The Imams awarded preference to the correct and reliable narrations based on their own research. At the same time, they rendered the unreliable narrations unworthy of implementation.

It is an accepted fact that the opinions of the mujtahids are extracted from the teachings of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). Often, their views were extracted from the explicit texts of the *Shari'a*. At times, certain injunctions were deduced on the basis of a particular cause found in the speech of Allah's Messenger (PBUH).

In short, specific rules and principles are required for practicing on the hadiths which enable one to award preference to some hadiths over others. The Imams of hadith and jurisprudence have differed over the matter of which principles apply in awarding this preference. It is a very lengthy discussion which we would prefer not to discuss in detail (here). In fact, the principles of hadith and jurisprudence are taught even before the major hadith books in our *madrasas*.

## Some Principles of Hadith

## TYPES OF HADITHS

Some of these principles will be mentioned briefly. The Imams of hadith, due to the aforementioned reasons, have divided the hadiths into three different categories: *mutawatir* [continuously recurrent], *mashhür* [well-known], and *khabaral-wahid* [a single person's report] or *ahãd* [solitary hadith].

A *mutawatir* hadith is one for which the narrators are so numerous in any given era that it is virtually impossible for such a large number of people to agree on a fabrication or an error. Examples of this include the existence of Bombay and Calcutta, the number of *rak'ats* in *salat*, or the number of fasts (to be observed in Ramadan).

The second type of hadith is called *mashhür*. This category is similar to *mutawatir* in some respects, but since there is very little or no difference of opinion regarding these two types of hadiths, we will not discuss them in much detail here. The only difference of opinion lies in the number of narrators required for a *mutawatir* narration and

whether a *mashhür* narration should be classified in the category of *mutawatir* or *khabar al-wahid*, or whether it should be a separate category.

At this juncture, we only wish to discuss the third type of hadith, i.e. *khabar al-wahid*. This category refers to those hadiths which do not reach the standards of *mutawatir*. Most narrations fall under this category.

First of all, this type of narration is divided into two types: accepted [*maqbul*] and rejected [*mardud*]. The great hadith master Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani says, "Besides *mutawatir* hadiths—which are undoubtedly acceptable—all other types of hadiths can be divided into two categories: *maqbul* and *mardud*. *Maqbul* is that type of hadith upon which practicing is obligatory. *Mardud* is that hadith the reliability of which supersedes its unreliability. Therefore, a hadith which is comprised of contradictory angles, in other words some angles pointing to its authenticity and reliability and others indicating its unreliability, will fall under the category of rejected [*mardud*]. However, if the angles warranting its acceptability are predominant then the hadith will fall under the category of reliable [*maqbul*]."

Thereafter, Ibn Hajar says that a rejected [*mardüd*] hadIth is not necessary to practice upon [*wäjib al-'amal*]. However, acceptable [*maqbul*] hadiths are of two types: those that are necessary to practice upon [*wãjib a1-'amal*] and those that are not necessary to practice upon [*ghayr wäjib a1-àmal*]. In other words, a hadith can technically be an accepted hadith [*maqbul*], but due to some reason or another it is not necessary to practice upon it.

Ibn Hajar further states, "At times an accepted hadith is not necessary to practice upon in spite of it being an accepted hadith, because of its contradiction with another hadith. In such a case, both hadiths will be compared to see if some harmony can be brought about between both. For instance, the scholars have brought about some harmony in the following two contradictory hadiths. The first hadith states, 'There is no such thing as contagious diseases in Islam,'[51] while another hadith states, 'Flee from a leper as you would flee from a lion.'[52] There is an apparent contradiction between these two hadiths, (though) both of them are authentic and reliable. The scholars have brought about some harmony between these two hadiths in various forms. Our aim at this juncture is not to elaborate on their opinions. All we wish to say is that where there is an apparent contradiction, the first and foremost step will be to bring about some harmony between them.

Conversely, if no harmony can be brought about between them, then we will assess whether one has precedence over the other, either in terms of its date or its occurrence. If this can be established, then the latter of the two will be accepted and practiced upon. If this is not possible, we would search for an external reason to grant preference to one over the other. However, if this proves futile, both narrations—in spite of being authentic—would be included in the category of rejected [*mardud*] hadiths, because of their apparent contradiction.

## THE BASIS OF REJECTION AND PREFERENCE

At this juncture, two points have attracted lengthy discussions from the scholars: the basis of rejection, i.e. the causes that render a hadith weak and unreliable; and the basis of preference. In other words, on what basis will one narration have preference over another in the case of two narrations that, in spite of being apparently contradictory, are both authentic?

Under these two extensive points of discussion, there have obviously been many other minor differences of opinion among the scholars. This is evident from the rules mentioned above. Let us examine the case of two apparently contradictory hadiths. These two hadiths will not necessarily be considered contradictory to every single knowledgeable person. In fact, at the very outset, the meaning of one of the two hadiths, according to a mujtahid, may not be contradictory to the other hadith. However, even if there is some contradiction between the hadiths, it does not necessarily mean that there cannot be some harmony brought about between them. There is a possibility, according to some people that harmony can be brought between them, though others may disagree. Once it is established that harmony cannot be brought about between them, it is obvious that differences of opinion are bound to occur regarding which of the hadiths should be given preference over the other. This is so because there is a possibility that one of the *mujtahids* will present such an analysis that renders one of them to be the latter category [*nasikh*], thereby abrogating the other. On the other hand another *mujtahid* may not reach such a conclusion.

However, if it cannot be established that one is the abrogator and the other is the abrogated, then once again differences of opinion will occur as to whether one of the two narrations can be preferred over the other due to certain other reasons. We will discuss this briefly at a later stage.

Such differences of perspective among the mujtahids are quite natural and understandable. For instance, a narrator narrates a hadith. Zayd considers the narrator to be a reliable person while Amr regards the narrator to be a liar. In another case, Zayd considers this narrator to be intelligent, whereas Amr regards him to be dull of perception. There could be many other reasons for these differences of opinion in this case; the narrator's hadith is acceptable according to Zayd, whereas Amr dismisses him as unreliable.

In short, due to the aforementioned reasons, many differences of opinion have occurred among the Imams of hadith and jurisprudence [*fiqh*] in many of the by-laws of Islam. Our objective in briefly explaining this is to expose the reasons for the differences of opinion among the scholars.

In these circumstances, one has either of two alternatives. The first is that he has the capability to assess all the reasons for the differences of opinion and he is in a position to award preference to one over the other and practice accordingly. He has the authority to do this and, Allah-willing, he will be rewarded for his efforts. Such a person is referred to as a mujtahid. On the other hand, if he does not have this capability to grant preference to some of those opinions over others, the next option is to follow a knowledgeable person.

Even under normal everyday circumstances, if a person does not know the road, he tends to follow someone who knows. However, before following anybody, one should examine the person he is following. Is he himself aware, or is he lost like his followers? If a person changes his leader at every cross-road, there is nothing but misguidance in store for him. This is why the scholars have compelled the masses to follow one particular scholar, and they have prohibited them from following various scholars at random.

## ASSESSMENT OF A NARRATOR

Nonetheless, due to the aforementioned reasons, the scholars have differed greatly on two different aspects of the hadiths.

First, they have differed on the basis of assessment [*ta'n*] of a narrator; in other words, on what grounds a hadith can be considered untenable. The hadith scholars have counted ten different reasons for the defectiveness of a hadith. Five of these are related to a narrator's reliability [*'adala*], while the other five are related to his memory [*hifz*]. The five relating to his reliability are as follows:

(1) He is a liar.

(2) He is accused of lying.

(3) He is a flagrant violator of Islamic law [*fasiq*]. This could either be in deed (e.g. he is a fornicator) or it could be in speech (e.g. he is a backbiter).

(4) He is guilty of reprehensible innovation [*bid'ati*].

(5) He is unknown.

As for the five relating to his memory; they are as follows:

(1) He narrates incorrectly in most cases.

(2) He has a tendency to be negligent when narrating.

(3) He has misgivings about his narration.

(4) He narrates contrary to other reliable narrators.

(5) His memory becomes impaired.

The scholars have differed on the aforementioned ten factors from two different angles. First of all, they have differed as to how these factors will render a hadith weak. For example, if a narrator is guilty of reprehensible innovation [*bid'ati*], will this render his narration unconditionally weak, or will his narration be unacceptable only when he narrates according to his innovation [*bid'a*]?

The second angle from which the scholars have differed deals with whether or not a narrator actually possesses the defect mentioned about hint. If a narrator is accused of having one of the above ten defects, does it really mean that he has that deficiency? For example, if a narrator is accused of speaking lies, this may be true according to the opinion of some people while others may consider him to be truthful and consider the error to be that of other narrators (in the chain).

Apart from these, there are other angles of differences among the scholars. For example, according to some scholars, if a narrator removes one of the links from the chain of narrators, he is thereby considered unreliable and the hadith is rendered weak. However, according to others, it is not an absolute rule that wherever a narrator is removed from the chain, the hadith is weak. There is more detail to this point. The scholars will first examine who the missing link is. Is he a Companion or is he someone else? They will also examine the person who removed that link: is he reliable or unreliable? Similarly, there are many other angles from which the scholars have differed over which factors would render a hadith weak. One group may consider certain points as contributing to the weakness of a hadith. Hence, wherever one of those points is found in any of the hadith, that hadith will be considered weak and the injunction that hadith mentions will not be established On the other hand, another group of scholars may not consider these points as factors that weaken a hadith. Hence, the hadiths that contain these points are not weak

according to them, and the injunctions mentioned in those narrations will be established on the basis of those hadiths.

My heart desires to write more in detail on this subject, but since this is an academic topic which would bore the average layman, I have tried to be as brief as possible.

## THE INDISPNSABILITY OF THE PRINCIPLES OP HADITHS

To sum up, one of the major reasons for the difference of opinion found among the *mujtahids* is that different Imams have different criteria for establishing the reliability of a hadith. This is why the scholars of hadith consider it imperative to teach the principles of hadith [*usul al-hadith*] before teaching the actual books of hadith. This enables the student to understand the reasons why some hadiths have been disregarded. At the same time, he will understand why scholars, in spite of an explicit proposition appearing in a hadith, act contrary to it.

This is why it has always been my fervent desire to request that the people who teach the translations of the hadiths would at least teach a brief summary on the principles of hadith. This would ensure that ordinary people, who zealously read the hadiths in translations because they are the speech of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) , are not led astray. It would also ensure that they do not become disinclined to the juridical rulings [*masa'il fiqhiyya*], and that they do not develop any evil thoughts about the hadiths. All of these factors can lead to a fatal deficiency in their faith [*din*]. And Allah guides whom He wills to the straight path.

The author of the *Tadhkira* writes, "There is a very intricate and difficult issue in the field of hadith that, since the fabricators and the preachers have fabricated many hadiths, and many other pious people have misunderstood the meaning of the hadiths, the *mujtahids* felt a need to establish a set of principles to assess the validity of a hadith. This set of principles will differ from the principles set up by the Imams of hadith."

There are also other factors which render a hadith unreliable. Until a person has knowledge about them, it is not permissible for him to practice upon the hadiths directly.

## Some Principles of Fiqh

## PRINCIPLES OF THE JURISTS FOR THE VALIDITY OF HADITHS

The jurists [*fuqaha'*] have composed a set of rules for the assessment of the validity of a hadith. These are placed under the heading *Bäb al-Sunna* [Chapter on the Sunna] in the books on principles of jurisprudence [*usül al-fiqh*].

We will briefly explain a few principles of the Hanafi school (in this regard), which will enable us to recognize the necessity of understanding the hadiths. These principles will also expose how unaware the so-called “followers of hadiths” are.

The scholars of the principles (of jurisprudence) have clearly stated that just as a certain amount of knowledge is required for the understanding of the Qur’an, there is also a need to understand the rules and principles of hadith study [*usül al-fiqh*]. For instance, a certain word in the Qur’än may be common or general; it could have more than one meaning, or it could be confined to a certain meaning only. Is a certain word taken literally, or does it have a figurative meaning as well? Is a certain order given as a command, or is it optional or is the statement giving permission to perform this action? One has to be well-versed in all these principles which deal with the significance of the Qur’an and hadith. In exactly the same way, one has to be well-versed in the principles that deal exclusively with the 5adiths. These principles are divided into a few categories.

The first of these categories deals with the chains of narrators linking us to Allah’s Messenger (PBUH). These chains render a narration *mutawatir*, *mashhür* or *khabar al-wahid*. *Mutawatir* hadiths have already been explained [see page 39]. *Mashhur* is that type of hadith of which the narrators were only one or two individuals from the era of the Companions, but after them the number of narrators reached the level of *mutawãtir*. *Khabar al-wähid* refers to that type of hadith which fails to reach the status of *mutawatir* right up to the last set of narrators.

The scholars have differed greatly as to whether the latter type of hadiths compels one to act upon it or not. According to the Hanafi school of thought, at times it is necessary to act upon them, while at other times it is not. According to the Mãliki school of thought, if a hadith of this nature is illogical, it is not necessary to practice upon it. However, according to the Hanafi school of thought, if the narrator is perceptive and discerning (for example, the narrator is one of the Four Caliphs, Abdullãh ibn Masüd, Abdullãh ibn Umar Abdullãh ibn Abbs, Abdullãh ibn al-Zubayr, Zayd ibn Thãbit, Mu'ãdh ibn Jabal, A’isha the Truthful, and so forth), then that type of hadith will compel us to practice upon it, whether it is logical or illogical. However, if the narrator is not as well-known in the field of jurisprudence [*fiqh*], his narration will not be accepted if the narration is contrary to other more rational narrations.

This is why when Abü Hurayra said that the consumption of anything cooked over fire nullifies wudu, Abdullah ibn Abbãs, dismissed his narration by asking, “If water heated over fire is used for wudu, will it be necessary to repeat the wudu’?”[53] Hence, Abdullãh did not consider this narration worthy of establishing as an injunction.

If the narrator of any hadith is unknown in the field of hadith, but the other narrators who are narrating from him are reliable, then he will also be considered as a known narrator and his narration will be accepted. However, there are four conditions for the reliability of a narrator:

(1) he should be a Muslim,

(2) he should be sane,

(3) his memory should be sound, and

(4) he should not be a flagrant violator of Islamic law [*fasiq*].

Each one of these conditions is mentioned in detail in its appropriate place. For example, that a person should not be a *fasiq* means that he should not perpetrate major sins, nor should he be guilty of consistently perpetrating minor sins. Similarly, that a person should be of a sound memory means that he heard the hadith with complete attention, he remembers it while he conveys it, and he understands the meaning of the hadith while listening to it.

The second category deals with the succession [*ittisal*] and interruption [*inqita'*] of a hadith. The specialists dealing with the principles of hadith have divided interruption into two types: apparent [*zahiri*] interruption and hidden [*batini*] interruption. Apparent interruption means that a link is missing in the chain of narrators, either among the Companions or the other narrators. The scholars have differed on this issue, as well as the issue of when a hadith is worthy of establishing as an injunction and when it is not. The second form of interruption is called, a hidden interruption, It is not exactly an interruption, at first glance, but due to their penetrative insight and their respect to the hadiths, the scholars have labeled it an interruption. This is why many scholars do not include it in the category of interruption. This hidden (or rather esoteric) form of interruption can be due to many reasons. It could be because the hadith is contrary to the Qur'an. For example, there is a hadith that states, "*Salat* is not permitted without *Surat al-Fatiha*."[54] This hadith apparently falls in contradiction to the general verse of the Qur'an, "Read from the Qur'an whatever is possible for you [*ma tayassara*]" (Surat al-Muzzammil 73:20). This is why the scholars say that the hadith in question has an hidden form of interruption in it.

This form of interruption could also be due to a particular hadith being contrary to a more famous authentic hadith. For example, there is a hadith that says, "Judgment can be passed with one witness and an oath." In other words, instead of the compulsory two witnesses required in court, if there is only one witness, an oath will be taken by the plaintiff in place of the other witness and a judgment can still be passed. However, this hadith is contrary to an authentic hadith which specifies, "A plaintiff is compelled to produce evidence (in the form of witnesses, etc.) and if he is unable to do so, the defendant should take an oath." On the basis of the latter narration, the first hadith would not be acceptable.

Similarly, if a narrator relates only a part of a famous incident and omits the other portion, this is proof enough that the narration is a bit dubious.

In addition, if the Companions do not accept a certain hadith and, following discussion among themselves, they infer their own judgments, this indicates that the hadith is not acceptable. Likewise, if a narrator refutes his own narration, or he acts in contrary to his own narration, or he issues religious verdicts [*fatawa*] against his own narration, his hadith is considered dubious.

I do not wish to lengthen this subject. The specialists of the principles of hadith have analyzed this matter in great detail. Whoever wishes to do so should consult their books.

## THE MOST BASIC REASON FOR DIFFERENCES

In short, all the Imams—whether they are Imams of jurisprudence or hadith—have a specific set of rules for assessing whether or not a hadith should be practiced upon. This has contributed greatly to a difference of opinion among the Imams with regard to the hadiths. One hadith may be accepted by some scholars because it reaches the standards set by them, while the same hadith will be rejected by the others because it does not conform to their established standards. The only person who will be able to come to some decision is the one who is wholly aware of the standards and principles set out by both of these groups. As for the person who is unaware of both, he—as the Persians would say—'himself is astray, so how can he guide others?"

Quite frankly, I am surprised at the people who do not follow any particular school of thought [*ghayr muqallidin*] who, in spite of knowing what is right, provoke the masses into believing that those who do follow a school of thought do not give much weight to a hadith that is in opposition to the opinions of the Imams. The masses of those who do not follow a school of thought are, after all, ordinary laymen. I do not have any complaint against them. However, I do have a complaint against the people of knowledge who, in spite of having knowledge, conceal the truth from the masses. They are actually disguising the truth and deceiving the *Umma*.

## The Four Schools of Fiqh

# THE OPINIONS OF THE IMAMS ARE ALL FROM THE HADTHS

The status of the Imams is extremely exalted. It does not befit their eminence to act contrary to the hadiths. Not even an ordinary, unlearned Muslim would accept the opinion of a great scholar if it were contrary to the hadiths of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). However, it is quite obvious that when it comes to bringing about harmony between two apparently contradictory hadiths or awarding preference to one over the other, the opinions of the four revered Imams will take preference over the contemporary scholars. This is an accepted fact, and to refute it is tantamount to unfairness and injustice.

In short, one of the chief reasons for the differences of opinion among the Imams is the basis of preference. Some narrations may be preferred by one group of Imams while other narrations may be preferred by another group of Imams. The group that prefers a certain hadith might consider another hadith contrary to it as defective, baseless, or reinterpreted.

Those people who have studied books dealing with the subject of the differences of the imams, for instance, *al-Mizan* of Allãma Sharäni, *Kitãb al-Mughni*, *Bidayat al-mujtahid*, and *Kashf al-ghumma*, are quite aware of the fact that the opinions of the Imams are all extracted from the very teachings of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). The only difference lies in the deduction and inferring of rulings [*masa'il*].

We will reproduce in brief a portion. of one of the chapters of Ibn Rushd's *Bidayat al-mujtahid*, which will elucidate the fact that the opinions of the Imarns are all extracted from the'verses of the Qur'an and the 1iadiths: Only the method of inferring differs.

***Examples of the Multi -Faceted Methods of Inference***

Ibn Rushd says, "The basis for the factors which invalidate *wudü'* is the verse '[...] or if any one of you comes after relieving oneself or you touched women' and the hadith 'Allàh does not accept the, *salat* of the person who has nullified his *wudü*' until he performs wudu" On the grounds of this hadith the scholars are unanimous that the passing of urine, stool, wind, pre-coital fluid, etc., invalidate the *wudu*. However, there are seven other factors upon which the scholars have differed in this issue.

First, they have differed over the impure substances that are emitted by parts of the body other than the private parts. The scholars have three different opinions on this matter.

One group of scholars considers the emission of impurity to be the cause of the breaking of the *wudü'*. They hold that the emission of impurity invalidates the wudu regardless of which part of the body emits it. This is so, according to them, because the cause (for nullifying the *wudu* i.e. the emission of impurity) is present. The people who hold this view are Imam Abü HanIfa and his school, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and Sufyan al-Thawri (may Allah be pleased with them all). A group of Companions was also inclined to this view, and their narrations support this view. According to this group, the emission of any impurity from any part of the body invalidates the wudu such as bleeding of the nose, blood-letting, vomiting, etc.

Another group of scholars consider the emission of anything from the private parts as the cause of the breaking of *wudu'*. Hence, according to them, whatever comes out of the private parts, whether it is blood or pebbles, and no matter how it comes out, in good health or due to some illness or the other, the *wudu'* wi1l be invalidated. This rule, according to them, will not apply to anything that comes out of any other part of the body. This view is held by Imam Shãfi'i '(may Allah be pleased with him) and his school

The third group has taken into account the emitted substances as well as the place of emission.. They are of the opinion that the emission of any normal substance from any of the two private parts, such as urine, pre-coital fluid [*madhy*], etc. invalidates the *wudu'*. However, if any abnormal substance emerges from any of the private parts, such as a worm or insect, the *wudü*' will still be intact. This view is held by Imam Mãlik (may Allah be pleased with him) and his school.

The very same verse has been employed by all four Imams in extracting the juridical rulings [*masã'il*] on wudu However, since they differed over the actual cause of the breaking of the *wudü* they subsequently differed over which rules are applicable to the factors that invalidate *wudu'*. Due to these differences in principles, the Imams have differed in the narrations as well.

Imam Abü Hanifa, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and Imam Shãfi'i (may Allah be pleased with them) maintain that even though the hadith only mentions, "whatever comes out of the two private parts" this is merely a sort of prototype or example. The injunction is a general one. Hence, a woman suffering from dysfunctional uterine bleeding [*istihada*] should also make *wudu'*. They also take support from the hadiths which mention that such a woman performs *wudu'*.

On the other hand, according to Imam Mãlik (may Allah be pleased with him), the command in this verse is not general, but is confined to what is actually mentioned. Hence, the hadiths which mention a woman who suffers from dysfunctional uterine bleeding performing *wudü'* are reinterpreted or found to be defective by him. He considers the excess *wudü'* for this woman to be an unfounded practice.

The second aspect of discussion regarding the aforementioned verse on the factors which invalidate *wudü'* is sleep. Regarding this, there are three schools of thought among the scholars. Some of them are of the opinion that sleep unconditionally breaks the *wudü* while others assert that sleep does not nullify the *wudü'* under any circumstance. The third group is of the opinion that sleep will break the *wudü'* at certain times only, while at other times it will not affect the *wudü'* at all. These differences appeared among the scholars because there are conflicting narrations regarding sleep. According to some narrations, sleep does not nullify the *wudu'*. Ibn Abbãs says that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) once went to Maymuna's house and slept so deeply that they heard him snoring. When he awoke, he performed, *salãt* without performing *wadu'*. Similarly, there is another narration that mentions certain Companions sleeping in the *masjid*. They used to nap while waiting for *salat*, and then perform the *salat* without making *wudu'*. However, there are many other narrations in contrast to this Safwan ibn Assal narrates that the Messenger of Allah said, It is not necessary to remove the leather socks (to make *wudü'*) after passing urine or

stool, or after sleeping. Wiping [*masah*] over them is quite sufficient. However, wiping will not suffice in a state of major impurity [*janaba*]." Similarly, Abu Hurayra narrates, "*Wudu'* is obligatory upon one who lies down and sleeps."

The scholars have assumed two different stances on these narrations. Some of them have taken up the path of granting preference to one narration over the other. This group has again been divided into two; some of them have found more angles of awarding preference to the first category of hadiths, while the second group awards preference to the second category of hadiths. Finally, the third group does not find any preferential factor to favor any one of the categories over the other. Therefore, they have brought about harmony between the hadiths by dividing sleep into various categories. Some types of sleep will invalidate the *wudu'* while the others will not.

The third issue of contention between the scholars is whether the touching of a woman invalidates the wudü' or not. One group is of the opinion that if a man touches a woman without anything separating them both, his *wudü'* is broken. The second group asserts that this rule is not unconditional. They maintain that the *wudü*' is broken only if there is touching by lust, otherwise it will remain intact. According to the third group of scholars, the *wudü'* remains intact under all circumstances if one touches a woman. This issue has remained one of debate even among the Companions. This is what prompted the three differing schools of thought among the Companions and Followers . Among the Imams, Imam Shafi'i holds the first opinion and Imain Mãlik is of the second opinion, while the third opinion is held by Imam Abü Hanifa (may Allah be pleased with them all).

The very basis for the differences found among these Imams regarding this issue is that the word *Lams* or "touching" (in the verse) is ambiguous; or rather, it is a homonym [*mushtarak*]. Allah says, "If you touched [*lamastum*] a woman" (Surat al-mã'ida 5:6). The word "*lams*" has a dual meaning in the Arabic language. It refers to sexual intercourse as well as literal touching with the hand. Consequently, the Imams differed over what sort of injunction should be extracted from this verse as well. According to some of them, the verse refers to sexual intercourse. Therefore, this verse does not deal with the factors which invalidate *wudu'*. This is the view of Imam Abü Hanifa (may Allah be pleased with him). However, according to the others, this verse is dealing with the factors which invalidate wudu and the word "*lams*" refers to touching a woman. Within this group, once again, there is a difference of opinion as to whether this injunction is general or restricted. According to the Shãfi'is, the injunction is general. Hence, by merely touching a woman, a man's *wudu'* is unconditionally broken.

Imam Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) is of the opinion that this is a restricted injunction. He restricts it to lust. Only when a person touches with lust will his *wudü'* become invalid. Every one of these Imams has some proof or basis to substantiate his assertion. For instance, Imam Abü Hanifa and Imam Mãlik (may Allah be pleased with them) prove their opinions with the following narration:

A'isha relates that on many occasions Allah's Messenger (PBUH) used to touch her, either in *salat* or outside of *salat*, and he did not repeat his *wudu*' after that. On one occasion, the Messenger of Allah was performing *tahajjud salat* in total darkness. At that time there was no lamp or any source of light in his house. Aisha was sleeping in front of him and whenever he wanted to go into prostration [*sajda*], the Messenger (PBUH) used to move her feet away to enable him to perform *sajda* (since the room was very small).

From this it is deduced that touching a woman does not nullify the wudu'

Now, the question arises as to whether all types of touching nullify the *wudü'*, or only specific types of touching. According to the Mãlikis, if one touches without lust, the *wudü'* is not nullified. According to the Hanafis, this is a general rule: the *wudu*' remains intact despite all types of touching. This is so because of another hadith in which 'A'isha says, "At times Allah's Messenger (PBUH) used to kiss his wives and, without performing *wudü*' he used to observe his *salat*." Obviously, this kissing stems from lust because a person generally kisses his wife out of desire.

In short, all these differences found among the Imams stem from the differences found in the narrations, as I have explained in detail in previous chapters. This is further compounded by the various differences regarding the grounds for preference and rejection among the Imams.

***Summary of the Above Discussion***

To sum up, the main reason for the differences among the Imams stems from their analysis and evaluation of the various hadiths. At times, one hadith may be regarded as authentic according to the research of one Imam, and he considers whatever to be established from it to be obligatory. However, the same narration may not reach the required stage of reliability according to another Imam. Hence, the second Imam does not consider that hadith strong enough to establish an injunction based on the contents of the narration. In reality, these differences are quite in order and are completely logical.

Since the basis of the weakness or reliability of a narration is based upon the conditions of its narrators, there are bound to be differences in practicing upon the narrations as well. The metaphor for this is a sick person who seeks the treatment of various doctors. One of them might say his illness is fatal, while the other might consider it mild. The third doctor might brush it off as a psychological problem, and he will not consider it an illness at all. In exactly the same manner, a narrator might be considered unreliable and rejected by some, while others might regard him as reliable, trustworthy, and truthful. In such circumstances, neither the doctors nor the Imams of hadith can be criticized. The nurse attending to the sick person or the followers of the *Shari'a* will be advised to adhere to whomever they feel is reliable. Allah will assist them. Obviously, the patient who has visited various doctors cannot apply all of their treatments together. He only has to take the medication prescribed to him by the doctor he is currently seeing.

***The Parable of the Imams of Hadith***

The Imams of hadith have likened the critique of the narrators to that of a bullion dealer. The moment he sets eyes on the gold, he can ascertain whether it is genuine or artificial. Hãfiz ibn Hajar writes in his *Sharh Nukhbat al-fikr*,

From all the various branches of the field of hadith, the most complex and intricate is that of (sifting through) the defective [*mu'allal*] hadiths. Only one gifted by Allah with an ingenious mind and a comprehensive memory can be proficient in this field. Together with this, he needs also to be cognizant of the status of all the narrators and extremely knowledgeable of the chain of narrators as well as the actual texts of the hadiths. This is why a very small group of people has ventured into this field. For example, Ali ibn al-Madini, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Imam Bukhãri, Daraqutni (may Allah be pleased with them all) are some of the few hadith scholars who ventured into this field.

He further writes,

At times, the hadith scholar relating the deficiency in a hadith does not explicitly specify whether any injunction can be deduced from the hadith or not.

Similarly, 'Allãma Suyutii (may Allah be pleased with him) writes in his *Tadrib al-rawi,*

The eighteenth type of hadith is the defective [*mu'allal*] hadith. This type of hadith is the most important and intricate. Only those people who are of perfect memory and proficient in analysis are able to gain some control over this type of hadith.

Hlikim al-Naysãburi states,

At times, a hadith is considered defective [*mu'allal*] even though there may not be any apparent factors rendering the hadith as such. According to us the only proof we have for its defectiveness is memory, comprehension, and deep understanding of the hadiths.

Ibn Mahdi states,

It is better for me to learn of the defectiveness [*'illa*] of one hadith than to learn ten new hadiths.

Allãma Nawawi states,

The defectiveness [*'lila*] of a hadith is a reference to a very subtle type of deficiency in a hadith. There might not be any type of apparent deficiency in the hadith, but there will be some inconspicuous flaw in it. This could be either due to the narrator being alone in the narration of this hadith, or due to his narration being contradictory to other narrators, or due to other reasons which the knowledgeable are aware of.

Ibn Mahdi was once asked, "At times you consider some hadiths weak and some of them to be authentic. How do you go about determining this?" He replied, "When you take your coins to a bullion dealer, do you ask him why he considers some of them to be genuine and some to be counterfeit? In actual fact, due to excessive exposure with the hadiths and constant sifting through them, one builds up this proficiency."

Abu Zur'a was once asked, "On what grounds do you consider same of the hadiths to be weak?" He replied, If I tell you that any hadith is defective, go and inquire from ibn Dara and then from Abü Hãtim. If they tell you the same thing, you will understand the reality of it all." This person did accordingly and he found this to be true.

I do not wish to encompass all their opinions in this regard. My only objective is to expose the fact that the Imams have differed mainly because of the apparent contradictions found in the narrations, as explained in. the above discussion. I have also explained that differences are obviously going to be found in their editing as well as their compilations.

## INFERENCE IN OUR TIMES

In our times, acquaintance with sacred knowledge [*'ilm*] is a thing of the past. Hence, besides the ordinary layman, many deficient so- called "intellectuals" are deceptively led to believe that the inferences [*ijtihad*] of the Imams are contrary to one another (and therefore, their inferences are not reliable).

In spite of the inferences of the Imams being in contrast to one another, it does not mean that they make inference [*ijtihad*] of the Islamic by-laws according to their own whims and fancies without any proof and basis. They primarily extract all the laws from the hadiths of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). They only differ in their angles of inference.

In short, the main reason for the differences found among the Imams is due to the difference of the status they give to the law- bearing narrations. A narration demonstrating a certain law might be accepted by one Imam, while another hadith contrary to the first one may be accepted by another Imam. The second Imam considers the second hadith authentic; hence, he accepts what it says. The Imams of jurisprudence [*fiqh*] are likened to doctors and

bullion dealers; it is their profession to accept or reject a narration. Hence, it would be foolish to object as to why a certain Imam has rejected a certain narration.

Today, after thirteen hundred (now fourteen hundred) years, it is not possible for us to determine whether the narrations that we have before us have exactly the same chain of narrators as the narrations of the people of the past. Nor is it possible for us to verify whether the reasons for the rejection of a certain hadith which we are aware of, or which Imam Bukhãri or Imam Muslim mention, are the only reasons for the rejection of that hadith, or whether there were any other reasons for its rejection.

Moreover, the status and era of the Imams precedes that of Imam Bukhãri and Imam Muslim. If this is the case with these two Imams, what about those that came after them, like Imam Abu Dãwud, Imam Tirmidhi, Imam Nasa'i, and Imam Ibn Maja. As for those who came even after them, like Daraquni and Bayhaqi, what status do they hold relative to the Imams? In spite of their magnificence in the field of hadith, they had no option in the field of jurisprudence [*fiqh*] but to follow one of the Imams, Memorizing a hadith is one thing, but to extract a juridical proposition or injunction from that hadith is another matter altogether.

The second angle of differences found between the Imams of jurisprudence is due to their various reasons for the preference of a hadith. Even though this was mentioned in brief in a previous chapter, I feel it is necessary to mention it separately in a bit more detail because this is one of the major reasons contributing to the differences found among the Imams.

In spite of two apparently conflicting hadiths being authentic, there are differences among the Imams regarding the preference of one narration over the other. In other words, what are their reasons for awarding preference to one of the two conflicting narrations? This is also a very lengthy discussion. One may study the works of the four famous Imams and get an understanding of the reality of this topic. I will merely explain this briefly in the form of an example..

Sufyan ibn 'Uyayna says

Imam'Abü Hànifa and Imam Awza'i (may Allah be pleased with them) once met in one of the bazaars of the blessed city of Makka. Imam Awzã'i said to Imam Abü Hanifa, "Why do yeu—the Hanafis—not observe the raising of the hands [*raf' al-yadain*] while proceeding toward *rukü'* and while rising from *ruku'* Imam Abu Hanifa replied, "We do not observe this because its veracity is not established from Allah's Messenger (PBUH)." Imam Awzã'i thereupon narrated the following hadith: "Zuhri narrates from Sãlim and he in turn from Ibn Umar that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) used to observe the raising of the hands while commencing the *salat*, while proceeding toward *ruku'* and while rising from it." Imam Abü Hanifa replied, "Hammäd narrates from Ibrãhim al-Nakh'ay and he in turn from 'Alqama and Aswad and they narrate from Ibn Mas'ud that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) would not raise his hands in, *salat* except at the beginning of the *salat* while observing the opening *takbir* [*tahrima*]."

Upon this, Imam Awzã'i commented, "There are only three links of narrators between me and Allah's Messenger (PBUH) in the hadith I have narrated, whereas there are four links in the hadith you have narrated. (Hence, the shorter link of narrators renders my hadith more authentic.)" Thereupon Imam Abü Hanifa, comparing the two chains of narrators, said, "Hammãd is amore superior jürist [*faqih*] than Zuhri, Ibrãhim Nakh'ay is also superior to Sälim and Alqama is also not inferior to Ibn Umar in jurisprudence. If Ibn Umar has the virtue of being a Companion, then Alqama also has certain virtues. As for the final link in my chain of narrators—Abdullah ibn Mas'ud—there s no need to mention his virtues." Imam Awza'i was thereupon compelled to remain silent.

Abü Bakr Ibn al-Arabi (may Allah be pleased with him) writes in his commentary of *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, "If there are any contradictions in the views of Ibn Mas'ud and Ibn 'Umar, then the view of Ibn Mas'üd will be awarded preference."

My aim in quoting this debate between these two scholars is merely to expose the reasons for preference that each one of them held. According to Imam Awzâ'i and also according to the Shãfi'is, the narration with the shorter link of narrators is awarded preference over the narration with the longer chain. However, according to Imam Abu Hanifa, preference is awarded to a narration according to the degree of-expertise in jurisprudence among the chain of narrators.

According to the principles of the Hanafi school, if there is a contradiction found between two narrations, the narration of a jurist [*faqih*] is awarded preference over the other. This sounds quite logical because the more intelligent a narrator, the more perfectly he will narrate the hadith.

Similarly, according to Imam Mãlik (may Allah be pleased with him), if there is a contradiction between some hadiths and the practice of the people of Madina Munawwara conforms to any one of them, that hadith will be awarded preference over the others. The practice of the people of Madina Munawwara is (to him) a preferential factor. This is quite evident from his book *Al-Muwatta'*.

The Mãliki scholar Ibn al-Arabi writes in the commentary of *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, "It is a principle of the Mäliki school of thought that if a hadith is popular among the people of Madina Munawwara, there is no need to analyze its chain of narrators."

There are many factors by which some hadiths are awarded preference over others. Häzimi has mentioned fifty such factors in his book *Kitab al-Nasikh wa 'l-mansukh*. Allama Iraqi enumerated over one hundred such factors in his *Kitab al-Nukat.*

Obviously, not all these factors are unanimously agreed upon by all of the various Imams. Those who claim to follow the hadiths directly are urged to analyze the hadiths thoroughly and determine which of the apparently conflicting hadiths have more preferential factors than the others. This will enable them to practice upon the hadiths which have more preferential factors, as opposed to those which have less.

## THE APPROACH OF THE HANAFI SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

Occasionally, the Hanafi school of thought awards preference to those hadiths which have a weaker chain of narrators or even to those hadiths whose chains of narration may not be as superior to the others. This is so because the narrations may possess some other more superior preferential factors. For example, the fact that a hadith is in greater conformance with the text of the Qur'an is one of the most noteworthy preferential factors that render a particular hadith superior to those that contradict it, according to the Hanafi school. This makes a great deal of sense, because the words of many of the hadiths are not the actual words of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). In most cases, they are the words of the narrators who narrated the meaning of the hadith, as explained previously. On the other hand, the words of the Qur'an are the actual words (of Allah) transmitted by the narrators. Therefore, from two conflicting narrations, the narration which is in greater conformance to the text of the Qur'an will obviously gain more preference over the other narration.

In one example of the above principle, the Hanafis award preference to the narration that does not mention raising of the hands in *salat* over the narration which does mention it. This is so simply because the Holy Qur'an declares, "And stand before Allah with ease and tranquillity" (Surat al-Baqara 2:238). Hence, from among the conflicting narrations, the Hanafis award preference to those hadiths which conform more closely to this form of tranquillity.

This ruling is also established from other previous occurrences. In the early days of Islam, it was permissible to speak (and to make *salãm*) in *salat,* but this was gradually abrogated and the *salat* metamorphosed into a more tranquil action. Hence, the narrations which conform more to tranquillity are more juridically preferable in the Hanafi school.

In addition, the narrations which do not mention any recitation while performing *salat* behind the Imam are awarded preference over those narrations which mention this practice. This is so because of the Qur'anic verse, "And when the Qur'an is being recited, listen to it attentively and remain silent" (Surat a1-Araf 7:204).

Similarly, it is better to delay the Fajr and 'Asr prayers because it is in greater conformance with the Qur'anic verse, "And glorify the praises of your Lord before sunrise and before sunset" (Sura Qaf 50:39). "Before sunrise" and "before sunset" means a time which is close to them. A period of three to four hours before sunrise or sunset is not normally referred to as being "before" sunrise or "before" sunset. Hence, the Hanafis are of the opinion that it is better to delay the Fajr and 'Asr prayers. Furthermore, the Hanafis have chosen the *qunut* (a supplication made in the *witr salat*) of '*Allahumma inna nastainuka..."* in the *witr salat* because they were considered as two *sürats* of the Holy Qur'an.

There are thousand of examples of this nature, but out of fear of long-windedness, I will leave them out. All I wish to add at this point is that it is extremely important for those who claim to follow the hadiths directly to acquaint themselves with the elements that contribute to the weakness of a narration and to understand the factors which render a particular hadith more acceptable than the others. Without this, it is not possible to practice upon the narrations.

During my student days, I commenced compiling a summary on the basic principles of the Imams and a summary on the factors that render one hadith more acceptable than the others. However, time did not assist me in completing it. And Allah is the best of guides.

# EPILOGUE

I had written more on this subject, but only managed to find rough manuscripts of these pages. Also, the magazine *Al-Mazahir* was terminated due to a lack of resources. ('This was the magazine toward which the author used to contribute articles on this topic.)

My colleagues insisted' that I complete this book and; it was also my desire to do so. I had lengthy and detailed discussions in mind and I had initially decided to write about four to five hundred pages, but due to my extremely busy schedule, I was unable to complete it. Since this book before you is incomplete, I had no hope whatsoever of it ever coming into print. Whenever my friends insisted publish it, I used to put them off saying that it is incomplete.

Nonetheless, during one of my journeys to Hijäz, my friend Mawlãna Aziz unearthed those lost pages from Allah knows where. One or two parts were still missing from the original manuscript, but in spite of this he insisted on printing it, saying that even an incomplete book of this nature would still be beneficial. My other colleagues respected Mufti Mahmüd, Mawlanã Yünus, Mawlãnã Aqil, Mawlãnã Salman, and others had also insisted that this book be published. Hence, I permitted Mawlanã Shãhid to go ahead in printing this book. May Allah grant benefit to him as well as to those who read this book.

(Mawlãnã) Muhammad Zakariyya

22 Jumada ‘l-Ulã 1391 AH

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In the last century, India has undoubtedly become an important centre for the study of hadith, and the scholars of India have become well known for their passion for religious knowledge. Upon them ended the era of leadership in teaching hadiths, codification of the special fields [*funun*} of hadith, and commentary upon its texts [*mutun*). Such was their mastery of this science that Muhammad Rashid Rida mentions in the introduction of his book *Miftah Kunüz al-Sunna*, “Were it not for the superb attention to detail in the science of hadith displayed by our brothers, the scholars of India in the present era, this science would have withered away in the eastern cities. And, indeed, mastery of this science has been waning in Egypt and Syria since the tenth century AH.” There is no doubt that Shaykh Muhammad Zakariyya was among the most distinguished hadith scholars of India and a great contributor in service of the Sunna. He was given the honorary title of Shaykh al-Hadith, or “Great Scholar of Hadith,” by his teacher, Shaykh Khalil Ahmad Sahãranpuri, who recognized his deep insight, clear-sightedness, and extensive knowledge of hadith and related sciences.

***Lineage and Upbringing***

He was born in the village of Kãndhlã (in Uttar Pradesh, India) on Ramadan 10, 1315 AH (February 12, 1898 CE). His full name was Muhammad Zakariyyã ibn Muhammad Yahya ibn Muhammad Ismãil, and his lineage continues all the way back to Abu Bakr the great Companion of the Messenger (PBUH) .

Shaykh Abu al-Hasan Nadwi said about him, “Shaykh Muhammad Zakariyya was born into a household rooted in knowledge and passion for Islam. His immediate family and his predecessors were distinguished by firm resolve, perseverance, steadfastness, and adherence to religion.... His family included many notable scholars ... and his grandmother memorized the entire Qur’an while nursing her son [Shaykh Zakariyyã’s father]. “

His father, Shaykh Muhammad Yahya, was among the great scholars of India, whose primary teacher in hadith was Shaykh Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. Under him he studied *Sahih, al-Bukhäri, Jami al-Tirmidhi*, and others of the six famous authentic books of hadith [*sihãh sitta*]. Shaykh Yalyã went on to teach at Madrasa Mazahir 'Ulum in the district of Saharanpur, but did not accept any payment for his services. He instead made his living through his own book- publishing business.

As a young boy, Shaykh Zakariyya moved with his father to the village of Gangoh, in the district of Saharanpur. Since his father and Shaykh Gangohi had a close relationship, Shaykh Zakariyya quickly earned the affection of his father’s teacher.

Growing up in this virtuous environment, he began learning how to read with Hakim ‘Abd al-Rahmãn of Muzaffarnagar He memorized the Qur’an with his father and also studied books in Persian and the introductory

Arabic books with his uncle Shaykh Muhammad Ilyas (founder of the Tabligh movement). He stayed with his father in the company of Shaykh Gangohi until age eight, when the shaykh passed away.

At the age of twelve, Shaykh Zakariyyã travelled with his father to Mazãhir 'Ulum. There, under his father, he advanced his study of Arabic, tackling many classical texts on Arabic morphology grammar, literature, and also logic. But by the time he was seventeen, hadith became the main focus of his life. He studied five of the six authentic books of hadith with his father, and then he studied *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* (for a second time) with the honourable Shaykh Khalil Ahmad Sahãranpüri. Out of his immense respect for hadith, Shaykh Zakariyya was extremely particular about always studying the hadith narrations with wudu'

On Dhü 'l-Qa'da 10, 1334 AH, when Shaykh Zakariyyã was just nineteen, his dear father passed away. This event was extremely traumatic for Shaykh Zakariyya, as he lost not only a father but also a teacher and mentor. His deep sorrow remained with him for the rest of his life.

***Teachers***

Shaykh Zakariyya was blessed to live and learn in an era considered by many to be one of great achievements in Islamic knowledge by scholars in the Indian subcontinent. He studied with few but select teachers who reached the highest levels of learning, research, authorship, and piety In addition to his father (Shaykh Muhammad Yahya) and uncle (Shaykh Muhammad Ilyas), he studied under the hadith scholar Khalil Ahmad Sahãranpuri, author of the *Badhl al-Majhüd*, a commentary on *Sunan Abi Däwüd*. Shaykh Zakariyyã acquired a hadith authorization from him and remained his student until Shaykh Khalil's death in Madina Munawwara in 1346 AH.

Before his death, Shaykh Khalil Ahmad expressed his desire to write *Badhl al-Majhud*, and he sought Shaykh Zakariyya's assistance as his right-hand man. This experience revealed Shaykh Zakariyyã's gift of penmanship and, furthermore, expanded his insight in the science of hadith. He worked hard on the project, attained the pleasure and trust of his shaykh, and was even mentioned by name in the commentary. This indeed opened the door to Shaykh Zakariyya's authoring many literary works and treatises over the course of his life.

***Teaching Career***

In Muharram 1335 Al-I he was appointed as a teacher at Madrasa Mazahir 'Ulüm where he was assigned to teach books on Arabic grammar, morphology, and literature, as well as a number of primary texts of Islamic jurisprudence. In 1341 AH he was assigned to teach three sections of *Sahih al-Bukhari* upon the insistence of Shaykh KhaliI Ahmad. He also taught *Mishkãt al-Masabih* until 1344 AH. Shaykh Abü al-Hasan Nadwi said, 'Although he was one of the youngest teachers at the school, he was selected to teach works generally not assigned to those of his age, nor to anyone in the early stages of his teaching career: Nevertheless, he showed that he was not only an able, but an exceptional teacher."

In 1345 AH. he travelled to Madina Munawwara, the city of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) , where he resided for one year. There he taught *Sunan Abi Dawud* at Madrasa al-'Ulum al-Shar'iyya. While in Madina, he began working on *Awjaz al-Masalik ila Muwatta Imam Malik*, a commentary on Imam Malik's Muwatta. He was twenty-nine at the time.

When he returned to India, he resumed teaching at Mazahir 'Ulüm. He began teaching *Sunan Abi Dawüd, Sunan al-Nasa'i* the *Muwatta of Imam Muhammad*, and the second half of *Sahih al-Bukhari*. The school's principle taught the first half of Sahih al-Bukhari and after his death, Shaykh Zakariyya was given the honor of teaching the entire work.

In all, he taught the first half of *Sahih al-Bukhari* twenty-five times, the complete *Sahih al-Bukhäri* sixteen times, and *Sunan Abi Dawüd* thirty times. He did not just teach hadith as a matter of routine; the work of hadith had become his passion, and he put his heart and soul into it. Shaykh Zakariyyã taught until 1388 AH, when he was forced to give up teaching after developing eye cataracts.

***Travels to the Two Holy Cities***

Allah blessed him with the opportunity to visit the two holy cities of Makka and Madina. He performed hajj several times, and his multiple trips had a profound personal effect on him, both spiritually and educationally. He made the blessed journey with Shaykh KhalIl Ahmad in 1338 AH and with him again in 1344 AH. It was during the second trip that Shaykh Khalil completed *Badhl al-Majhud*, he died shortly thereafter and was buried in the Baqi' graveyard in Madina. May Allah have mercy on him and put light in his grave.

***Sincere Love for Allah & the Prophet***

Shaykh Muhammad Zakariyyã inherited piety honesty, and good character from his father (may Allah be pleased with him). He aspired to follow the Qur'an and Sunna in all matters, big and small, with a passion not found in many scholars. He had extreme love for the Prophet and the blessed city of Madina. His students have related that whenever the death of the Messenger (PBUH) was mentioned during a lecture on *Sunan Abi Däwüd* or *Sahih al-Bukhari* his eyes would swell up with tears, his voice would choke up, and he would be overcome with crying. So evocative were his tears that his students could do nothing but weep with raised voices.

He was often tested with regard to his sincerity. He was offered many teaching jobs at two or three time the salary that was customarily given at Mazähir 'Ulüm, but he always graciously declined the offers. For most of his teaching career, Shaykh Zakariyya never accepted any money for his services at Mazãhir 'Ulum; he did the work voluntarily, seeking Allah's pleasure. Although he did accept a small salary at the beginning of his career, he later totalled up the amount and paid it back in its entirety.

***Household***

Shaykh Muhammad Zakariyyã was married twice. He first married the daughter of Shaykh Ra'uf al-Hasan in Kandhlã. She passed away on Dhü 'l-Hijja 5, 1355 AH. He then married the daughter of Shaykh Muhammad Ilyas Kandlawi in 1356 AH. Allah blessed him with five daughters and three sons from his first wife, and two daughters and one son from his second marriage.

***Daily Routine***

Shaykh Zakariyyã organized his time meticulously. He would rise an hour before dawn and occupy himself in *tahajjud* and recitation of Qur'an before performing the Fajr prayer in the *masjid*. After Fajr, he would read his morning supplications and litany until sunrise. Thereafter he would go to meet with some people and drink tea (but never ate anything with it). He would then return to his quarters to read. During this time he would also research and compile his literary works, and, with few exceptions, no one was allowed to visit him at this time. When it was time for lunch he would come out and sit with his guests, who were from all walks of life; he would respect and treat them well, irrespective of who they were. After Zuhr prayer, he would take a siesta and then spend some time listening to his correspondence (which amounted to around forty or fifty letters daily from different places) and dictating replies. He also taught for two hours before 'Asr. After 'Asr he would sit with a large group of people, offering them tea. After performing Maghrib, he would remain devoted in solitude to optional prayer and to supplication. He did not take an evening meal except to entertain an important guest.

***Personality***

Shaykh Abü ‘l-Hasan Ali Nadwi says about his characteristics, “He was extremely vibrant, never lazy; light-hearted, smiling, cheerful, friendly; and he often jested with his close friends and acquaintances. We saw in him good character and forbearance with people, as well as a rare humility; and above all, his personal qualities were always governed by his deep faith and sense of contentment.”

***Death***

He had always hoped to meet Allah while in the city of the Messenger Allah granted his wish. He died there on Monday Sha'bãn , I4O AH (May 2., 1982 CE) and was buried in Jannat al-Baqi’, in the company of the Companions and the noble family members of the Messenger (PBUH) . His funeral procession was followed by a large number of people and he was buried in the Baqi’ graveyard next to his teacher Shaykh Khalil Alimad Saharanpüri. May Allah forgive him, grant mercy, and elevate his status. *Amin*.

***Scholars’ Praise of Him***

Many scholars, both Arab and non-Arab, have praised him and recognized his knowledge and excellence. ‘Allãrna Mubammad Yusuf Binnóri relates,

Indeed there are some remnants of the scholars of past generations living today among the scholars of today’s generation. They have been guided to praiseworthy efforts in multiple religious sciences, such as jurisprudence; they are on par with the previous generations in their knowledge, excellence, fear of Allah, and piety; they stir up memories of the blessed golden age of scholarship. Among these scholars is a unique figure envied for his excellence in knowledge and action, the author of outstanding, beneficial works and of beautiful, superb commentaries: Shaykh Muhammad Zakariyya Kãndhlawi Saharanpuri.

Shaykh Sa’id Ahmad, the head of Islamic studies at the University of Aligarh, UP, relates,

It is evident to one who takes a look at his works that he had a brilliancy, both in knowledge and with the pen, like that of Ibn al-Jawzi and Imam Ghazãli. Of the scholars of his era, I know of no one comparable to him in this regard, except Imam ‘Abd al-Hayy al-Farangi Mahalli (of Lucknow).

Shaykh Abü ‘l-Hasan ‘Ali Nadwi relates that Shaykh ‘Alwai al-Maliki said,

When he reports the ruling and evidences of the Mãliki school [in his writings], we Mâlikis are astonished at the accuracy and integrity of the report.... If the author had not mentioned in the introduction of [his] book that he was a Hanafi, I would not have known that he was Hanafi, but would have definitely concluded that he was a Mãliki, since in his *Awjaz* he cites by-laws and derivatives of the Maliki school from their books that even we have a hard time obtaining.

***Students***

Shaykh Zakariyyã had numerous students who spread around the world and continue, to this day, to serve Islam, particularly establishing traditional Islamic schools in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, England, Canada, America, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and other countries. Some of his more prominent students in the field of hadith were Muhaddith Muhammad Yüsuf Kandhlawi (d. 1384 AH), author of *Amani ‘l-Ahbar Sharh Ma’ani ‘l-Athãr*, Shaykh Abd al-Jabbar Azami, author of *Imdad al-Bàri* (Urdu commentary on *Sahih al-Bukhari*), and Mufti Mahmüd Hasan Gangohi (d. 1417 AH). Many other scholars and students also acquired authorizations in hadith from him, including Dr. Muafã’ al-Sibãi, Shaykh Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghudda, Dr. Muhammad Alawi al-Mäliki, and Shaykh Muhammad Tahã al-Barakãti.

***Written Works***

Shaykh Zakariyyã wrote many works both in Arabic and Urdu. A number of them treat specialized subjects intended for scholars, and the rest have been written for the general public. His works demonstrate his deep knowledge and intelligence; his ability to understand the issue at hand, research it thoroughly, and present a complete, clear and comprehensive discussion; his moderation, humility (as can be seen from the preface of this book), patience, and attention to detail. His respect and awe for the pious predecessors are evident in his works, even when he disagrees with their opinions on any particular aspect.

His first written work was a three-volume commentary of the *Alfiyya Ibn Malik* (on Arabic grammar), which he wrote as a student when he was only thirteen. His written works amount to over one hundred. He did not withhold any rights to his works and made it publicly known that he only published his works for the sake of Allah's pleasure. Whoever wished to publish them was permitted to, on the condition that they were left unaltered and their accuracy maintained.

Hence, his books have gained overwhelming acceptance throughout the world, so much so that his work *Fada'il al-Quran* [Virtues of the Qur'an] has been translated into eleven languages, *Fada'il Ramadan* [Virtues of Ramadan] into twelve languages, and *Fada'il al-Salat* [Virtues of Prayer] into fifteen languages. He wrote four books on Qur'an commentary [*tafsir*] and proper recitation [*tajwid*], forty-four books on hadith and its related sciences, six books on jurisprudence [*fiqh*] and its related sciences, twenty-four historical and biographical books, four books on Islamic creed [*aqida*], twelve books on abstinence [*zuhd*] and heart-softening accounts [*riqaq*], three books in Arabic grammar and logic, and six books on modern- day groups and movements.

***Some of His Hadith Works***

One can find a complete list and description of his books in the various biographies written on him. Here is a brief description of a few of his more popular works on hadith:

<u>*Awjazal-Masalik ila-Muwatta'Imäm Malik*</u>: One of the most comprehensive commentaries on the Muwatta of Imam Mãlik in terms of the science of hadith, jurisprudence, and hadith explication. Shaykh Zakariyya provides the summaries of many other commentaries in a clear, intellectual, and scholarly way, dealing with the various opinions on each issue, mentioning the differences of opinions among the various scholars, and comparing their evidences. This commentary written in Arabic, has won great acclaim from a number of MãIiki scholars.

<u>*Lami' al-Dirari 'ala Jami' al-Bukhari*</u>: Written in Arabic, a collection of the unique remarks and observations on Sahih al-Bukhari presented by Shaykh Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. These life-long acquired wisdoms were recorded by his student Shaykh Yahyã Kãndhlawi (Shaykh Zakariyyã's father) during their lessons. Shaykh Zakariyya edited, arranged, and commented on his father's compilation, clarifying the text and adding a comprehensive introduction at the beginning.

<u>*Al-Abwab wa 'l-Taràjim Ii 'l-Bukhãri*</u>: An explanation of the chapter headings of Imam Bukhãri's Sahih al-Bukhari. Assigning chapter headings in a hadith collection is a science in itself, known among the scholars as *al-abwãb wa 'l-taräjim* [chapters and explanations]. In it, the compiler explains the reasons for the chapter heading and the connections between the chapter headings and the hadiths quoted therein. It is well known that the commentators of *Sahih al-Bukhari* have paid special attention to the titles therein, in tune with the Arabic saying: "The *fiqh* of Bukhäri is in his chapter headings" [*fiqh al-Bukhari fi tarajimihi*]. Shaykh Zakariyyã not only quotes and compiles what has been mentioned by other scholars like Shah WaIi Allah al-Dehlawi and Ibn Hajar aI-Asqalani, but also correlates and clarifies these opinions and presents findings from his own research in many instances.

*Juz' Hajjat al- Wida' wa Umrat al-Nabi* : A comprehensive Arabic commentary on the detailed accounts of the pilgrimage [*hajj*] of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). It includes the details of any juridical discussions on the various aspects of pilgrimage, giving the locations, modern-day names, and other details of the places the Messenger of Allah passed by or stayed at.

*Khasa'il Nabawi Sharh Shama'il al-Tirmidhi*: Composed in Urdu, a commentary on Imam Tirmidhi's renowned work *Al-Shamã'il al-Muhammadjya*, a collection of hadiths detailing the characteristics of the Messenger (PBUH). This commentary explains the various aspects related to the different characteristics and practices of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). It has been translated into English and is widely available.

[Adapted from the Arabic biography on Shaykh Zakariyya Kãndhlawi by Wali'1-Din Nadwi]

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